

# **My Life and My Efforts**

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Title: My Life and My Efforts

(Translation of “Mein Leben und Streben”) Author: Karl May

Translator: Gunther Olesch

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My Life and My Efforts, Volume I

[Mein Leben und Streben, Band I]

Autobiography by Karl May (1842-1912) Translated by Gunther Olesch in 2000  
from the 1st edition of 1910

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Translator's Introduction

Karl May, born in 1842 under the name Carl Friedrich May, published the first volume of his autobiography in November of 1910. He never found the time to write the planned second volume or any of the other future works he is referring to in this book before he died in 1912.

Rudolf Lebius felt insulted by what Karl May had to say about him in his autobiography, and, less than one month after the sale of this book had started, Lebius succeeded in obtaining an injunction against it, so that it had to be taken out of the shops, and all remaining copies had to be destroyed. Rudolf Lebius is portrayed by Karl May as a villain of the worst kind, a man who changes his political loyalties for money and specialises in blackmailing people, after digging up dirt from their past, in order to control and use them and, most of all, in order to extort money. It is a fact that Lebius had been asking Karl May to "loan" him money, and when Karl May refused to pay, Lebius started publishing ever more aggressive articles against May in a newspaper he owned, full of exaggerated and partially false accusations. Lebius had been working for several newspapers with different political backgrounds before joining the social democratic party and writing for their newspapers. After founding his own newspaper, he left the party and changed his political views into the very

opposite.

Lebius then focused on anti-Semitic propaganda, and, after the first world war, he even led an anti-Semitic party for a few years. He died in 1946.

Thus, the first edition of Karl May's autobiography could only reach a few hundred people, probably mostly among German speaking readers outside of Germany, *e.g.* in Austria, where the injunction of the German court did not apply. About three month prior to his death, Karl May wrote to his publisher: "Concerning 'My Life and My Efforts' I am willing to do your bidding. I will tackle it." Whether Karl May rewrote some parts of his autobiography, is uncertain, but very soon after his death, his publisher announced that an abridged version would soon be available. Four month after Karl May's death, this abridged version was published. It did not just omit the passages about Rudolf Lebius, but much more, and it even added texts taken from other autobiographical writings by Karl May. This adaptation is credited to Karl May's widow and E.A. Schmid (1884-1951). Little more than a month had passed before someone else, the lawyer Oskar Gerlach, felt insulted by this version and obtained an injunction against its publication.

The publisher reacted by printing new, mostly blank, versions of those two pages Gerlach had objected against, instructing booksellers to rip out the offending pages and to glue the new ones in. In December of 1912, the lawsuit was settled, and the remaining copies of the adaptation could be sold with all of its pages, but a new edition would have to be changed. This third, further abridged edition was published in 1914 by E.A. Schmid. In early 1917, a 34th volume was added to the series of Karl May's collected works, of which 33 volumes had been published in the author's lifetime. This 34th volume is titled "Ich" <I>. It contains another abridged version of the autobiography as well as a few other texts, mostly about, but not by, Karl May. By 1995, this book had gone through 39 editions, in which the text of the autobiography had again been revised several times, though the later revisions aimed at a partial restoration of the original text. The compilation of other texts contained in this volume also differs in the various editions. Even the edition of 1995

still omits a large passage (at least 36 pages in the first edition) about Rudolf Lebius. It also moves two passages which had been omitted from the seventh

chapter in previous editions to an appendix. In the first one of these passages, Karl May writes about his views on plagiarism.

Though, Karl May insists on being truthful in this book, one should not approach it without scepticism. It is particularly hard to believe that all of his repeated deceptions, assuring his readers that his fictional adventure stories were based on fact, were all just designed to set the scene for some great work, he was all the time planning to write at some later point in his life. Probably, his mind just sought a way to escape his unpleasant past and his present problems with his failing marriage to his first wife by retreating into the fictional persona of the protagonist of his novels.

Furthermore, there are many details where May's memory might have proven slightly unreliable or which he might intentionally or subconsciously try to conceal. For instance, his description of the events due to which he was thrown out of the boarding school completely contradicts the version found in the school's files.

He writes that before Christmas he had to clean the candlesticks and kept the tallow he scratched off of them, to make small candles from it, to be used as Christmas decorations. He was watched by a fellow student, who reported this theft of what Karl May regarded as garbage to the principal. According to the school's files, it happened like this: In November, Karl May had to clean the candlesticks and to replace the burnt down candles.

Two weeks later, two older students found six complete candles in his unlocked suitcase. They turned them over to the student who was in charge of the candles for that week, but agreed not to tell the teachers. Shortly before Christmas, accusations are made that, at two occasions, money had been stolen. The students who had found the candles came forward and were reprimanded by the teachers for having covered the matter up before. The question of the stolen money was never resolved.

Also, everything Karl May tells us about the life of his father's mother before he

was even born is very questionable. It would seem that this grandmother was not just a gifted story-teller, but might also have invented a more romantic past for herself, which she then passed off as the truth to her family, just as Karl May later also pretended that his fictional novels were true. Karl May writes that this grandmother lost her mother at an early age.

She fell in love with his grandfather, but felt obliged to devote all of her energy to taking care of her ailing father. Thus, she kept her faithful lover waiting until her father had died. After giving birth to two children, she lost her husband in a tragic and rather dramatic accident at Christmas. After some hard times, she found a job as a housekeeper, had a near-death experience, lost her job, and married a poor weaver by the name of Vogel, who also died shortly afterwards. Some aspects of this story plainly contradict the few facts from her life which could be pieced together from old church documents. These facts are: On May the 1st, 1803, she married C.F. May, while both of her parents were still alive. Five months later, their daughter was born. In 1810, her son Heinrich, Karl May's father, was born. The records of his baptism state that Heinrich's father was not his mother's husband. He was baptised under his mother's maiden name. On February the 4th, 1818, C.F. May died due to a "disorderly way of life" (whatever this is supposed to mean). In 1820, the mother of Karl May's grandmother died. In 1822, she married C.T. Vogel. In 1825, her father died. In 1826, C.T. Vogel died. Later in the same year, a church document lists her son Heinrich with the surname May.

There are indications that Karl May was not just aware of the fact that some things he wrote about his grandmother were not literally true, but that he had also invented some of it himself. The most striking indication of this is an old book of oriental myths, entitled "Der Hakawati", which May claims had belonged to his grandmother. He claims that the fable of Sitara, which he tells us in the beginning of his autobiography, had been contained in this book. It seems that neither such a book nor the author Christianus Kretzschmann ever existed. The author's name is strangely similar to May's grandmother's maiden name J. Christiane Kretzschmar. The fable of Sitara seems to be Karl May's own creation. In the end of the fifth chapter, he mentions another book, which he claims he had received from a man who had a great impact on his life while he was in prison. This book also never really existed. Apparently, these books are only meant to serve as symbols for abstract concepts and ideas which he got to



know through the persons concerned. Thus, not just Karl May's novels, but also his autobiography, would have to be interpreted in a somewhat allegorical way, not necessarily representing literally true facts, but rather symbolising a spiritual truth.

Karl May's grandmother is of particular interest, because he writes that she had inspired the character of the princess Marah Durimeh, whom May regarded as the female counterpart in the Orient to the Indian chief Winnetou in America. Winnetou is the title character of Karl May's most famous novel and also appears in several others of his books. But Karl May never wrote the planned novel about Marah Durimeh, which he had intended to cover three or four volumes, just like "Winnetou". Thus, Marah Durimeh only plays a comparatively smaller role in his existing novels and we can only guess how he planned to develop this character into the central character of his later, unwritten works.

Though the fifth chapter, relating the darkest part of Karl May's life, is the longest in the book, it still skips many things, which the author obviously does not want to remember. Thus, the question which crimes he had actually committed remains largely unanswered. He also does not tell us anything about the journeys he claims to have taken in those days, promising to disclose this in the second volume, which he never wrote. The rumours he fostered that he had already in this early part of his life travelled to the Orient and to America are definitely not true; he probably never left Germany at this time. Only in his later years, he took a long trip to the Orient and Asia (1899-1900) and a trip to America (1908).

As far as the lawsuits and the events which led up to them are concerned, Karl May, of course, cannot be expected to relate them in an objective manner. After he had resigned his job at H.G.

Muenchmeyer's publishing company in 1877, he wrote for other publishers and got married in 1880. From 1882 on, we find him working for Muenchmeyer again, writing those novels which were to become the reason for his first lawsuit.

According to Karl May, Muenchmeyer was on the verge of bankruptcy and begged May to save him with his gift for writing bestselling novels. But the truth might have been rather different. Karl May admits himself that the other publisher, he had mainly been working for, did not pay him much: “The royalties I received from Pustet were (...) so insignificant that I cannot bring myself to naming the amount.”

Having to support a wife, one can easily imagine that May was the one who was in need of some cash. Furthermore, I have read elsewhere that Muenchmeyer had payed May an advance of 500 marks, a fact which May fails to mention in his autobiography.

And then there are Karl May’s allegations that Muenchmeyer, or rather one of employees, had spiced up those novels with indecent passages. Though it is likely that some abridgment had taken place, the claim that those novels were completely rewritten from morally impeccable stories into immoral trash are surely an exaggeration. For almost twenty years after their original publication, nobody seemed to be offended by these so-called “indecent novels”. Only after Muenchmeyer’s widow had sold the rights to these novels, which she did not even own, and was therefore sued by Karl May, articles started appearing in the newspapers denouncing these novels as highly immoral. These articles were not just designed to destroy Karl May’s reputation and thereby ruin his chances in the pending lawsuits, they also increased the demand for the illegally printed copies of these novels. Perhaps, Karl May saw no other way to escape this trap than to pretend that his novels had been altered, and perhaps, his memory of them had also changed, regarding them as closer to his later works than they really were. At any rate, a proof, one way or the other, would be impossible. The original manuscripts had been destroyed, and those who allegedly rewrote these novels were already dead when the lawsuit started.

After Karl May’s death, E.A. Schmid obtained the rights to all of his works. He believed in the myth that Karl May’s novels had been thoroughly rewritten without the author’s consent and made sure that the original versions were no longer published. He then created what he regarded as “improved” versions of all of Karl May’s works. Especially the disputed novels, originally published by

Muenchmeyer, were rewritten rather dramatically; large parts of the plot were removed and new solutions to certain mysteries were invented; characters from Karl May's more popular novels were added; *etc.* Generations of readers have known Karl May only through Schmid's adaptations. After Karl May's works had entered the public domain, a few editions presenting the original texts have been published, but the vast majority of all books sold in Germany under the name of Karl May still contains the adaptations by Schmid *et al.*

I have read that Karl May was the most frequently translated German author of all times, but unfortunately this does not apply to the English language. Though even the Encyclopaedia Britannica describes him as "one of the world's all-time fiction bestsellers", he is virtually unknown by most English speaking readers. The earliest English translation of one of his works came in 1886, probably in the form of a weekly series of booklets under the title "Rosita" (a translation of "Das Waldroeschen", the first one of those disputed novels Karl May had written for H.G. Muenchmeyer under a pseudonym). I suppose, these booklets were just as quickly discarded and forgotten as they were printed.

In 1898, two books entitled "Winnetou, the Apache knight" and "The Treasure of Nugget Mountain" were published, containing a severely abridged and altered translation by Marion Ames Taggart of Karl May's most famous novel "Winnetou". Among other things, the main character is changed from a German, implicitly a Protestant, into an American, whom the translator has named Jack Hildreth and who keeps on emphasising that he was a Catholic. In one place, the translator has even added a line in which the hero is made to point out that the religion of the murderer Rattler was not his own, but that of a non-Catholic, when Winnetou suggests to him that he had the same religion as the murderer. In the original book, the hero simply answers "Yes" and then goes on to explain, as he also does in the translation, that the murderer did not keep the commandments. These liberties of the translation are particular serious since Karl May often had to defend himself against allegations of promoting Catholicism, though being a Protestant, just because he published many of his stories in a Catholic magazine. In 1900, the series of translations by M.A.

Taggart was continued with "Jack Hildreth on the Nile", based on Karl May's "Der Mahdi" a.k.a. "Im Lande des Mahdi". You can find these three books on the Internet at: <http://karlmay.uni->

[bielefeld.de/kmg/sprachen/englisch/primlit/index.htm](http://bielefeld.de/kmg/sprachen/englisch/primlit/index.htm) In 1955, a translation of the beginning of Karl May's big oriental adventure by M.A. de Becker and C.A. Willoughby has been published under the title "In the Desert". I have neither read this, nor any other later translations, but I have read about this translation that it had a tendency to simplify, shorten, and paraphrase the text. It is also peculiar that someone would only translate the first volume of a novel in six volumes. Thus, the reader would witness the hero finding the body of Paul Galingre in the desert and starting on his pursuit of the killers, but he would never solve the mystery and discover the criminal mastermind behind all of it in the end of the last volume. In 1971, two volumes of short stories entitled "Canada Bill" and "Captain Cayman", translated by Fred Gardner, have been published in London. These sold only about 3000 copies each. In 1977, a series of translations by Michael Shaw was published. It included "Ardistan and Djinnistan" (2 volumes), "Winnetou" (2 volumes), and "In the Desert" (1 volume). These translations have been described as faithful to the original. In 1979, the series was continued with 4 books, entitled "The Caravan of Death", "The Secret Brotherhood", "The Evil Saint", and "The Black Persian", continuing the oriental adventure which had started with "In the Desert". Only between 3000 and 4500 copies were sold per volume.

In 1980, some of these books were reprinted as pocketbooks, but less than half of the printed books were actually sold, which put an end to all plans for further English translations. (By the way, the German original of "Winnetou" had sold about three million copies in the edition as volumes 7 to 9 of "Karl May's collected works" alone, when I bought it many years ago.) In 1998, there seems to have been a new edition of Michael Shaw's translation of "Winnetou", and in 1999, David Koblick published his abridged translation of the first volume of "Winnetou".

In this first (and only) volume of his autobiography, Karl May describes his life until about 1887/88 and then turns to the current events of 1910, when he had to defend himself against various slanderous accusations, touching only upon those events from the meantime which are somehow connected with these lawsuits.

In the time from 1887 to 1899, he wrote most of those novels which have been the foundation of his lasting popularity. In 1899/1900, he went on his long journey through the Orient and, in 1908, he visited America. In the unwritten

second volume of his autobiography, Karl May had planned to discuss those novels and his travels in detail. Here, I only want to give a short list of his work and a few events in his life after 1887: 1887: Karl May publishes “Der Sohn des Baerenjaegers” <The Son of the Bear-Hunter> in a magazine for boys, published by Wilhelm Spemann. In the course of the following years, he off and on publishes several stories there, which are later collected in seven books. This gets him the reputation of being mainly an author for children, against which he vigorously protests in this autobiography. Nevertheless, these stories, mainly set in the Wild West, still rank among his most popular works.

1888: May finishes his big oriental adventure novel, which he had already started publishing in a magazine called “Deutscher Hausschatz” in 1881. For eight years (with interruptions), the readers of this magazine had been able, to follow the adventures of the first person narrator, whom many readers identified with the author, regarding the imaginative story as a factual account.

On September the 6th, Karl May’s father dies.

In early October, he moves from Dresden to one of its suburbs, called Koetzschenbroda.

1889: Karl May meets Richard Ploehn and his wife Klara. They become his closest friends.

In October, the “Hausschatz” starts publishing Karl May’s novel “El Sendador”.

1890: Karl May can no longer afford to pay the rent on his large house in Koetzschenbroda. He moves to Niederloessnitz.

1891: Karl May moves to Oberloessnitz.

In October, the magazine’s publication of “El Sendador” ends, and “Der Mahdi”

starts.

F.E. Fehsenfeld becomes May's publisher. This marks the beginning of a series of 33 books, called "gesammelte Reiseerzählungen"

<collected traveller's tales>, which are regarded as his most important works.

1892: On April the 6th, H.G. Muenchmeyer dies.

The first six volumes of the "collected traveller's tales", containing the big oriental adventure, are published, with one additional chapter in the end of the sixth volume, which was previously unpublished.

1893: Karl May and his wife take a trip to the Black Forest.

Afterwards, they visit F.E. Fehsenfeld and his wife, and together they travel to Switzerland. The trip only worsens the deteriorating relationship of Karl and Emma May.

"Winnetou", Karl May's most famous novel, is published as volumes 7 to 9 of his "collected traveller's tales". While the first one of these three volumes was written entirely from scratch by Karl May, only reusing very few ideas from earlier stories, volumes two and three mainly recycle material, which he had previously published as individual stories.

Volumes 10 and 11, published by Fehsenfeld, present collections of earlier stories with a few new passages to tie them together.

In September, the publication of "Der Mahdi" in the "Hausschatz"

ends and "Satan und Ischariot" starts (though this title is not used by the magazine).

1894: Karl May's health is suffering. Together with his wife, he visits a health

resort in the Harz Mountains.

“El Sendador” is published as volumes 12 and 13 of Karl May’s “traveller’s tales”, with only minor changes, but under new titles. Volume 14 contains the first volume of a new western novel, entitled “Old Surehand”.

Karl May rejects an offer by Pauline Muenchmeyer, the widow of H.G. Muenchmeyer, to write a new novel for her.

1895: Volume 15 is published as the second volume of “Old Surehand”, but it does not really continue the story of the first volume, but rather interrupts it with a series of flashbacks to earlier stories, in which the title character does not even occur.

In editions published after Karl May’s death, these stories have been removed, so that “Old Surehand” no longer covers three, but only two volumes. Most of the contents of the original second volume was then adapted into an additional volume entitled “Kapitaen Kaiman”.

[The English translations published in 1971 under the titles “Canada Bill” and “Captain Cayman” are based on these stories which Karl May originally incorporated into the second volume of “Old Surehand”.]

Karl May is visited by Ferdinand Pfefferkorn and his wife. Karl May had gone to school with Pfefferkorn, who had since then emigrated to Lawrence, Massachusetts. The Pfefferkorns conduct spiritualistic seances with the Mays and probably also the Ploehns.

On December the 30th, Karl May buys a house in Radebeul, which he names “Villa Shatterhand” after his alter-ego “Old Shatterhand”

from his western novels. Here, he spends the rest of his life.

Nowadays, the house continues to be preserved as a museum.

1896: Karl May further fosters the myth that his fictional adventures were based

on facts by commissioning a gunsmith to make three customised rifles for him, which he then passes off as the “actual” weapons used by the two main characters from his novel “Winnetou”. He also has himself photographed, dressed in appropriate costumes, as the main character from his adventure stories.

“Der Mahdi” is published under the title “Im Lande des Mahdi” <In the Land of the Mahdi> as volumes 16 to 18 of Karl May’s “collected traveller’s tales”. Originally the story consisted of two parts, which were both too large to fit into one volume each.

Karl May shortened the first part and extended the second part to fill two volumes. Thus, most of the third volume presents new material, not included in the magazine’s version. Volume 19

contains the third volume of “Old Surehand”, not published before and finishing the story which had begun in the first volume.

1897: “Satan und Ischariot” is published as volumes 20 to 22 of the “traveller’s tales”. In adapting the novel for this edition (in the year before), Karl May had realised that Heinrich Keiter, the editor of the “Hausschatz” magazine, had almost entirely removed a rather long chapter from the novel. May demanded that his original manuscript should be returned to him, but only those pages of the lost chapter which had been ignored in their entirety, as well as most of the last third of the novel, had survived. But still, in spite of all this, he did not completely restore the novel for the edition published by Fehsenfeld.

Instead, on about six printed pages, he only gives a summary of the lost chapter, which otherwise would have covered approximately 200 pages. After Keiter’s promise that this would never happen again, Karl May writes the beginning of “Im Reiche des silbernen Loewen” <In the Empire of the Silver Lion> for the magazine, but discontinues his work on account of a new controversy. For the next ten years, Karl May publishes no further novels in this magazine.

Karl May and his wife travel through a large part of Germany, Austria, and Bohemia.

Volume 23 of the “collected traveller’s tales” presents a collection of earlier



short stories, and volume 24 contains a new novel, called “Weihnacht!” <Christmas!>.

1898: On August the 30th, Heinrich Keiter dies.

“Im Reiche des silbernen Loewen” is published as volumes 26 and 27 of the “traveller’s tales” with an additional chapter, not published before.

1899: “Am Jenseits” <Near the Afterlife> is published as Karl May’s 25th volume for Fehsenfeld.

On March the 26th, Karl May embarks on his big trip to the Orient.

In Egypt, the news of the planned illegal printing by Adalbert Fischer of his earlier novels reaches him. He protests and threatens to sue. Furthermore, he has to find out that a smear campaign has been started in several German newspapers against him and his work, while he has been travelling abroad.

1900: May is joined on his journey by his wife Emma, his friend Richard Ploehn, and his wife Klara. He returns home on July the 31th.

Karl May publishes a book of poetry, entitled “Himmelsgedanken”

<Thoughts of Heaven>.

1901: On February the 14th, Karl May’s friend Richard Ploehn dies.

May writes his pacifist novel “Et in terra pax”, but has to interrupt it, since it violates the not so peaceful intentions of the publisher Joseph Kuerschner.

The illegal publication of his earlier novels starts, causing those lawsuits, which were to drag on until long after Karl May’s death.

1902: Karl May publishes a third volume of “Im Reiche des silbernen Loewen” as the 28th volume of his “traveller’s tales”, but this is no longer a plain adventure novel like the first two volumes, but rather an allegorical novel with many hidden, autobiographical references.

On September the 10th, Karl May files for divorce.

1903: On March the 4th, the divorce is final.

On March the 30th, he marries Klara, the widow of Richard Ploehn.

The fourth volume of “Im Reiche des silbernen Loewen” is published as the 29th volume of the “traveller’s tales”.

1904: The lawsuits against Rudolf Lebius start.

The painter Sascha Schneider, a close personal friend of Karl May, creates new cover illustrations for his novels, which reflect the metaphorical interpretation which Karl May now gives to all of his work.

Karl May completes “Et in terra pax” and publishes it as volume 30

of his “collected traveller’s tales” under the German title “Und Friede auf Erden” <And Peace on Earth>, upon a suggestion by his publisher.

1905: Karl May meets Bertha von Suttner, who won the Nobel Peace Prize that year.

1906: Karl May publishes his drama “Babel und Bibel”. It is generally rejected by the critics and has, to my knowledge, never been performed on stage.

1907: On January the 9th, Karl May wins his lawsuit against Adalbert Fischer and Pauline Muenchmeyer.

On April the 7th, Adalbert Fischer dies.

Karl May reconciles his differences with the “Hausschatz” magazine and publishes in it his novel “Der Mir von Dschinnistan”.

1908: On September the 5th, Karl and Klara May embark on their journey to America. They visit New York, Albany, Buffalo, and the Niagara Falls. In Lawrence, Massachusetts, Karl May meets his old friend Pfefferkorn, who had emigrated to America. On October the 18th, he makes a speech on mankind’s big questions: “Who are we?

Where do we come from? Where do we go to?” Probably in early November, he returns home, to depart again for London by the end of this month, spending about one week in England.

In early December, Karl May and his wife return home.

1909: The magazine’s publication of “Der Mir von Dschinnistan”

ends. Under the new title “Ardistan und Dschinnistan”, this novel becomes volumes 31 and 32 of his “collected traveller’s tales”.

Karl May adds an fourth volume to his Winnetou trilogy, written in his new, allegorical style. It is published in an supplement to a newspaper called “Augsburger Volkszeitung”.

1910: The fourth volume of Winnetou is included into his “traveller’s tales” as its 33rd and last volume.

Karl May publishes his autobiography.

1911: Karl May's health is getting worse. From May to July, he spends time in several health resorts in Austria and Italy.

On December the 18th, Karl May wins his lawsuit against Rudolf Lebius.

In the end of the year, May suffers from a severe case of pneumonia.

1912: Against doctor's orders, Karl May accepts an invitation to speak before the academy for literature and music in Vienna. On March the 20th, he arrives in Vienna, and in an interview with a newspaper reporter, he says: "What I have created up to now, I regard as preliminary studies, as etudes. I have, in a manner of speaking, tested my audience. Only now, I want to approach the actual work of my life."

On March the 22th, he speaks before an enthusiastic audience of about 2000 people.

On March the 30th, back at home in Radebeul, he dies.

About my translation:

This translation is based on the first edition of 1910.

That one footnote from the original text is marked with a [1].

Here and there, I have added some footnotes, to explain things which do not translate so well into English or some readers might not be familiar with. These

additional footnotes are marked with [a], [b] *etc.* I admit that there are still a few more expressions which might require an explanation, but I could not fully resolve myself.

Names of places and titles of books are often left untranslated, but when they carry a translatable meaning I have added this in angle brackets.

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## My Life and My Efforts

Autobiography by Karl May

# Volume I

Original title:

Mein Leben und Streben, Selbstbiographie von Karl May, Band I

[Translated by Gunther Olesch in 2000]

The day this world will cast you from its sight, Go calmly forth from here and don't lament.

By means like this, it freed you from your plight, And as it did you wrong, it will repent.

(Karl May "Im Reiche des silbernen Loewen" [a]) [a] A slightly different version of this poem can be found in "Im Reiche des silbernen Loewen IV" <In the Empire of the Silver Lion, Volume 4> a.k.a. "Das versteinerte Gebet" <The Petrified Prayer>. There, the last line would translate literally as "and therefore it has to bear all of your guilt", whereas here a more literal translation would be "and it now has to bear its guilt (from its offence) against you by itself".



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I. The Fable of Sitara

If someone should go in a straight line from the earth to the sun within three months and proceed beyond the sun for another three months into the same direction, he would reach a star named Sitara. Sitara is a Persarabian word, meaning nothing more than “star”.

This star has much, very much, in common with our earth. Its diameter is 1700 miles [a] and its equator 5400 miles long. It revolves around itself and simultaneously also around the sun.

One movement around itself takes precisely one day, the movement around the sun takes just as precisely one year, not a second more or less. Its surface consists of one part land and two parts water. But, while there are five continents

to be found on earth, the land of Sitara is arranged in a different, much simpler manner. It is all connected. It does not form several continents, but just a single one, which consists of the lowland, full of morasses, and the highland, boldly towering up towards the sun. Both are connected by a rather small, steeply ascending strip of jungle. The lowland is a plain. It is unhealthy, rich in poisonous plants and savage beasts, and at the mercy of all the tempests, raging from sea to sea. It is called Ardistan. Ard means earth, soil, a base substance, and figuratively it means the pleasure of mindless existence in filth and dust, the inconsiderate amassing of material possessions, the cruel, destructive fight against everything that does not belong to one's own self, or is not willing to serve it. Thus, Ardistan is the home of the low, selfish ways of life, and in respect to its more evolved inhabitants, the land where *personsof\_violenceand*

*egotism* live. The highland, on the other hand, is lofty, healthy, eternally young and beautiful, kissed by sunbeams, rich in natural gifts as well as the products of human efforts, a garden of Eden, a paradise. It is called Jinnistan. Jinni means spirit, beneficent ghost, bliss-bringing, unearthly creature, and figuratively it means the inborn yearning for higher goals, the pleasure in mental and spiritual progress, the busy striving for everything which is good and noble, and most of all the joy in promoting one's neighbours' happiness, the wellbeing of all those who require love and assistance. Thus, Jinnistan is the realm of humanity and neighbourly love, stretching upwards like the mountains, the once promised land of the *noblyspirited\_people\_*.

[a] This refers to the now outdated old German geographic mile, which had a length of 4.6126 statute miles. Thus, Sitara has precisely the same size as Earth.

Down below, Ardistan is ruled by a line of vile thinking, selfish tyrants, whose most supreme law reads mercilessly short: "YOU

SHALL BE YOUR NEIGHBOUR'S DEVIL, SO THAT YOU SHALL  
BECOME YOUR OWN

ANGEL!" And high above, Jinnistan was ruled for countless ages by a dynasty of generous, genuinely royal-minded regents, whose most supreme law reads delightfully short: "YOU SHALL BE YOUR

## NEIGHBOUR'S ANGEL, SO THAT YOU SHALL NOT BECOME YOUR OWN DEVIL!"

And for as long as this Jinnistan, this land of the nobly spirited people, exists, every citizen had been required to be secretly, without exposing him-or herself, the guardian angel of one other person. So, there is happiness and sunshine for Jinnistan, but in Ardistan, there is just a deep spiritual darkness and the forbidden, and therefore secret, lamentation for liberation from this hell! No wonder that down there, in the lowland, an ever growing desire for the highland developed! No wonder, that the more evolved ones of the souls there sought to free themselves from the darkness and sought redemption! Millions and millions enjoy life in the morasses of Ardistan. They have grown used to the miasmas. They do not want to have it any other way. They would not be able to exist in the clean air of Jinnistan. These are by no means just the poorest and lowest, but even more so the richest and most distinguished inhabitants of the land: the pharisees, who need sinners in order to appear righteous, the prosperous, who require poor people for contrast, the lazy ones, who must have workers for their convenience, and most of all the smart, cunning ones, for whom the stupid, trusting, honest ones are indispensable, to be exploited by them. What would happen to all those privileged ones, if the others were not to exist any more? Therefore, everyone is most strictly forbidden, to leave Ardistan and to escape the pressure of its laws. But the harshest punishment is inflicted upon him who dares to flee to the land of neighbourly love and humanity, to Jinnistan. The border is guarded. He will not get through. He will be apprehended and brought to the "spirits' furnace", to be tortured and tormented, until the pain forces him to beg for forgiveness and to return to the hated oppression.

This is because, between Ardistan and Jinnistan, there is Maerdistan, that steeply ascending strip of jungle where the infinitely dangerous and strenuous way up passes through its labyrinths of trees and rocks. Maerd is a Persian word; it means "man". Maerdistan is the frontier land, where only "men" may dare to venture; anybody else would necessarily perish. The most dangerous part of this almost entirely unknown area is the "forest of Kulub". Kulub is an Arabian word. It means the plural of "heart". Thus, the enemies who have to be conquered one by one, if one would want to escape from Ardistan to Jinnistan,

lurk in the depths of the heart. And in the midst of this forest of Kulub, that place of torture is to be found, about which I have written in “Babel and Bible”, page 78: “In Maerdistan, the forest of Kulub, Lies lonely, hidden well, the spirits’ furnace.”

“Do spirits forge there?”

“No, but they are forged!

Storms bring them, drag them, here at midnight’s time, When lightnings light the sky, tears pour like floods, Where hatred comes on them in grim delight, And envy digs its claws into the flesh.

Remorse will sweat and wail where bellows blow.

The pain is by the block with staring eyes, A blackened face, the hammer in his hand.

There, now, o sheik, the pliers grab you fast.

They toss you to the blaze; the bellows creak.

The flame flares upwards, far beyond the roof, And all that you possess and what you are, The flesh, the mind, the soul, and all the bones, The sinews, fibres, tendons, flesh and blood, The thoughts and feelings, everything and all, Is burnt from you, is tortured and tormented Up to the whitest blaze - - -”

“Allah, Allah!”

“Don’t scream, o sheik! I’m telling you, don’t scream!

For screamers are unworthy of this pain, Are thrown away to be the dross and refuse And must, at last, be molten down again.

But you would want to be the steel, a blade That glistens in the paraklet’s [a] own fist.

Be quiet, thus!

“He rips you from the fire - -

He casts you on the anvil - - holds you tight.

It clangs and cracks on you in every pore.

The pain will start its work, the smith, the expert.

He spits into his fists, and then he grasps, Lifts with both hands, the giant hammer up - - -

The blows do strike. Each blow is like a murder, A murder killing you. You think you're crushed.

Hot scraps spew widely, everywhere around.

Your self gets thinner, smaller, even smaller, And yet, you must go back into the fire - -

Again - - and yet again, until the smith Will see the spirit in hell's agony,  
Through all the gloom of soot and hammers' blows, Who smiles at him in calm and grateful joy.

This one is fixed into the vice and ground.

The file does screech, and eats away from you Whatever still - - -”

“Desist! It is enough!”

“It does go on, for now the drill is used, It spirals deeply - - -”

“Silence! Oh, for God's sake!”

*etc. etc.*

[a] parakletos (Greek): a person called to one's aid, especially to intercede before God, used in John 14-16 for the Holy Spirit (the King James version translates it as "comforter")

here) and in 1John 2:1 for Jesus Christ (the King James version translates it as "advocate" here).

So this is how Maerdistan is like, and this is what is going on inside the "spirits' furnace of Kulub"! Every inhabitant of Sitara knows the tale which says that the souls of all important people, who are to be born, are sent down from heaven. Angels and devils are waiting for them. A soul who is so fortunate to come across an angel will be born in Jinnistan, and all of its paths are smoothed. But the poor soul who falls into the hands of a devil will be dragged to Ardistan by him, and hurled into an even deeper misery, the higher the task was which the soul had been given from above. The devil wants it to perish and rests neither day nor night to turn him, who was destined to be gifted or ingenious, into a rotten and doomed individual. All resistance and rebellion is futile; the poor soul is doomed. And even if he succeeded in escaping from Ardistan, he would still be apprehended in Maerdistan and dragged to the spirits' furnace, to be tortured and tormented, until he loses his last bit of courage to resist.

Only rarely, the heavenly strength, given to such a soul hurled to Ardistan, is thus great and thus inexhaustible that it could bear even the strongest pain of the spirits' furnace and face the smith and his fellows "through all the gloom of soot and hammers' blows, and smile at him in calm and grateful joy." Even the greatest pain is powerless against such a heavenly child, it is immune; it is saved. It will not be destroyed by the fire, but rather purified and fortified. And once all the dross has fallen off, the smith has to keep his distance, because there is nothing left that would belong to Ardistan. Therefore, neither man nor devil can prevent it now, and may all of the lowland burst out in an roar of rage, from rising up to Jinnistan, where everyone is his neighbour's angel. - - -

## II. My Childhood

I was born in the lowest and deepest part of Ardistan, a favourite of distress, worry, and sorrow. My father was a poor weaver.

Both of my grandfathers had met with fatal mishaps. My mother's father died at home, my father's father in the forest. On Christmas day, he had gone to a neighbouring village, to fetch some bread. Nightfall came suddenly. In a raging snowstorm he lost his way and plunged into the ravine of "Kraehenholz" <Crows'

Wood>, which used to be rather steep, and could not struggle his way out again. His tracks were blown away. He was searched for a long time in vain. Not until the snow had disappeared, his corpse, and also the bread, was found. Generally, Christmas has very often been, for myself as well as my family, not so much a joyous time, but rather a time of tragic misfortune.

I was born on February the 25th, 1842, in the tiny town of Ernstthal <Earnest Valley> in the Erzgebirge <Ore Mountains> [a], which was a very poor and small town then, mostly populated by weavers. Now, it has been incorporated into the slightly larger Hohenstein <High Rock>. There were nine of us: my father, my mother, both grandmothers, four sisters, and me, the only boy.

My mother's mother scrubbed floors for other people and span cotton. On some occasions, she earned more than 25 pfennig per day. Then, she became generous and gave us five children two tiny rolls of bread, which only cost four pfennig, because they were extremely hard and stale, often even moldy. She was a kind, hard working, silent woman, who never complained. She died, as one would say, of old age. The real reason for her death was probably what is nowadays discretely termed as "being underfed".

About my other grandmother, my father's mother, there is more to tell, but not here, at this point. My mother was a martyr, a saint, always quiet, infinitely hard working, constantly willing to make a sacrifice for other, even poorer people in spite of our own poverty. Never ever, I have heard her speak a bad word. She was a blessing for everyone she met, and a special blessing for us, her children.

No matter how hard she suffered, she would never let anyone know about it. But at night, when she sat, busily knitting, by the light of the small, smoking oil-lamp and thought no one was watching, it happened that a tear came to her eye to run down her cheek, vanishing even faster than it had appeared. With one movement of the fingertips this trace of her sufferings was instantly wiped away.

[a] Erzgebirge: the mountain range which forms the border of Saxony with Bohemia.

The name of the town is spelled “Ernsttal” throughout most of the original book. In 1901, there had been a reform of the German spelling system, changing “th” into “t” in all words where it does not transliterate the Greek letter theta. Thus “Thal” <valley> became “Tal”. But this change should not be applied to names of places and persons.

My father was a man of two souls: One soul of infinite tenderness and one of tyrannic proportions, knowing no limits in his rage, incapable to control himself. He possessed outstanding talents, all of which remained undeveloped on account of our immense poverty. He had never attended any school, but had learnt through his own efforts to read fluently and to write very well. He was naturally handy in all crafts necessary for daily life. Whatever his eyes saw, his hands could reproduce. Though being just a weaver, he was nevertheless capable to tailor his own coats and trousers, and to sole his own boots. He enjoyed whittling and sculpting, and what he achieved in these field had some appeal and was not too bad. When I wanted a violin, and he did not have the money to buy the bow as well, he swiftly made one himself. Its shape was not so beautifully curved, and it lacked in elegance, but it was entirely fit for its job. Father liked to busy himself with his work, but all of his work was always done in a hurry.

What took another weaver fourteen hours, took him only ten. He then used the other four to do things he enjoyed more. During those ten hours of immense strain, he was very bad company, everyone had to keep quiet, no one was allowed to stir. At these times, we lived in constant fear of arousing his rage. Then, woe on us! Attached to his loom, there was a threefold woven rope, which left blue marks on the flesh, and behind the oven, he kept the well known “birch-



wood Hans”, whom we children particularly feared, because father loved to soak it in the large “oven-pot”

before every chastisement, to make it more elastic and therefore more penetrating. But on the other hand, when the ten hours were over, we had nothing to fear any more. We all sighed in relief, and father’s other soul smiled at us. He could be downright endearing then, but even in most joyous and peaceful moments, we felt like standing on an active volcano, which might erupt at any given moment. Then we got the rope or the “Hans”, until father’s strength wore out. Our oldest sister, a highly gifted, kind, happy, conscientious girl, was still disciplined by slaps to the face after she was engaged, because she had come home from a walk with her fiance just slightly later than she had been permitted.

Here, I have to interrupt, to interject a serious, more important remark. I am not writing this book for my opponents’ sake, to respond to them or to defend myself against them. I am rather of the opinion that the manner in which I am being attacked renders any kind of response or defence impossible. Nor am I writing this book for my friends, because they know, understand, and comprehend me, so that I have no need to inform them about myself. I rather write it only FOR MY OWN SAKE, to become certain of myself and to account to myself what I have done up to now and what I am still planning to do. Thus I write in order to confess. But I am not confessing to people; after all, they would also never think of admitting their sins to me, but rather I am confessing to my God and myself, and whatever these two will say after I have ended, will bear upon me. Thus, these are not ordinary, but sacred, hours in which I write these pages. I am not just talking here for this life, but also for the other life I believe in and I am yearning for. In making this confession, I put myself into this entity and existence as which I will persist after death. Thus, it can be truly, truly irrelevant to me, what my friends or foes will say about this, my book. I place it in very different hands, the right hands, the hands of destiny, of omniscient providence, which knows neither favour nor disfavour, only justice and truth.

Here, nothing can be concealed or embellished. Here, everything has to be said and admitted honestly as it is, no matter how disrespectful it may seem or how much it might hurt. Someone had invented the expression “KarlMay-problem”. Well then, I accept it and let it stand. This problem will not be solved by any of

these people, who have not even read my books or did not understand them and nevertheless pass judgement upon them. The KarlMay-problem is mankind's most fundamental problem, transposed from the huge, all encompassing plural into the singular, into the single individual. And the same way this problem of mankind is to be solved, the KarlMay-problem is also to be solved, there is no other way! Whoever turns out to be incapable of solving the KarlMay-puzzle in a satisfactory, humane manner, shall for God's sake keep his feeble hand and inadequate ideas from grasping beyond his own self and to deal with more difficult questions that concern all of mankind! The key for all of these puzzles exists for a long time. The Christian church calls it "original sin" [a]. To know the forefathers and foremothers is to understand the children and grandchildren; and only with a humane attitude, a truly noble spirit, one will be enabled to be truthful and honest concerning one's ancestors, in order to be able to be just as truthful and honest concerning the descendants. To bring the influence of the deceased on later generations to light, is, on the one hand, a bliss and, on the other hand, a redemption for both parts. And therefore, I too have to describe my family just as they have been in reality, whether this might be regarded as being contrary to child's duty or not. I do not only have to be truthful concerning them and me, but also concerning all of my fellow-men. Perhaps someone else could learn from our example to do the right thing in his own affairs. - -

[a] "Erbsuende": the German expression for "original sin"

suggests rather a meaning of "inherited sin". Actually, the idea of Adam's original sin being inherited by every human being at birth is rather common among Catholics and Protestants (but is rejected by Orthodox Christians). I have been told that this belief is based on a misinterpretation of Romans 5:12 by St. Augustine, who interpreted the words for "sin" and "death" as synonymous in this verse: "as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men".

Entirely unexpectedly, mother had inherited a house as well as a few small, linen money-pouches from a distant relative. One of these money-pouches contained lots of two-pfennig-pieces, another one lots of tree-pfennig-pieces, and a third one lots of groschen [a]. A fourth one contained three score of fifty-pfennig-

pieces, and in the fifth and last pouch, ten old pieces of six from Schaffhausen, ten eight-groschen-pieces, five gulden [b], and four taler [c] were found. This was really a fortune! In our poverty, it seemed almost like a million!

Granted, the house was just as wide as three small windows and largely built of wood, but on the other hand, it was three storeys high and had on the very top, right under the ridge of the roof, a pigeonry, which is, of course, not so commonly found.

Grandmother, my father's mother, moved into the ground floor, which only consisted of one room with two windows and the entrance. Behind the room was a chamber with an old mangle, which was rented to other people at two pfennig per hour. There were happy Saturdays, when this mangle earned us ten, twelve, yes even fourteen pfennig. This increased our standard of living quite extensively. On the first floor, the parents lived with us.

There stood the loom with its reel. On the second floor, we slept with a colony of mice and some larger rodents, who usually lived in the pigeonry and only visited us at night. There also was a cellar, but it was always empty. Once, it held a few bags of potatoes, but they did not belong to us, but rather to a neighbour, who did not have his own cellar. Grandmother remarked that it would be much better, if the cellar belonged to him and the potatoes to us. The yard was just big enough for us five children to stand in it without crowding each other. It adjoined the garden, which contained an elder-bush, an apple-tree, and a plum-tree, as well as small pond, which we called our "lake". The elder-bush supplied us with the tea, we drank in order to get into a sweat, whenever we had caught a cold. But it did not last very long, because as soon as one of us children had caught a cold, all others started coughing as well and wanted to sweat along. The apple-tree always blossomed very beautifully and amply. But since we knew just too well that apples taste best right after the blossoms were gone, all apples were usually harvested as early as the beginning of June. The plums, on the other hand, were taboo to us. Grandmother enjoyed them far too much. They were counted daily, and nobody dared to touch them. Nevertheless, we children got more, much more of them, than what was our rightful share. As far as the "lake" is concerned, it was full of life, but unfortunately not with fish, but with frogs. We knew all of them individually, even by their voices. There were always between ten and fifteen of them. We fed them with earth-worms, flies, beetles, and all kinds of other nice things we could not enjoy ourselves for gastronomic or aesthetic reasons, and they always responded very gratefully. They knew us.

They left the water, whenever we approached them. Some even allowed us to hold and pet them. But the full measure of their gratitude could be heard at night, when we were falling asleep. No dairymaid could enjoy her zither more, than we enjoyed our frogs. We knew precisely, which one it was, making his noise, whether it was Arthur, Paul, or Fritz, and when they even began to sing in a duet or in a chorus, we jumped out of our beds, opened the windows, to join the croaking, until mother or grandmother came and put us back where we belonged. Unfortunately, one day, a so-called district-physician came to our small town, to conduct a so-called health-survey. Everywhere, he found something objectionable.

This equally weird and callous man clapped his hands over his head, as soon as he saw our garden and our beautiful pond, and declared that his cesspool of pestilence and cholera had to disappear at once. The next day, the policeman Eberhardt brought a note from the town's Judge Layritz, stating that within three days the pond had to be filled in and the population of frogs had to be killed, otherwise a fine of fifteen "good groschen" [d] had to be payed. We children were outraged. To murder our frogs!

Well, if Judge Layritz had been a frog, then we would have done it with pleasure! We discussed the matter, and as we decided, so it was carried out. The water was scooped from the pond, until we could catch the frogs. They were put into the large basket, which had a lid, and carried to the large pond of the coalpit behind the rifle-house, grandmother marching ahead, we followed. There, every frog was individually taken from the basket, lovingly petted, and put into the water. How many sighs could be heard, how many tears were shed, and how many condemning judgements were passed on that so-called district-physician, I can no longer say with certainty now, after more than sixty years have passed. But I still know quite definitely that grandmother assured us, to put an end to our immense sorrow, every one of us would, after precisely ten years had passed, inherit a three times larger house with a garden, five times as large, which would contain a ten times larger lake with twenty times larger frogs. This brought an equally sudden and pleasant change to our disposition.

Cheerfully, we marched home with grandmother and the empty basket.

[a] Groschen: a coin worth 10 pfennig.

[b] Gulden, a.k.a. guilder: a coin worth 20 groschen.

[c] Taler (outdated spelling: Thaler), a.k.a. dollar: a coin worth 30 groschen.  
(The American currency was named after this coin.)

[d] “Guter Groschen” (good groschen): an older type of groschen, worth slightly more (1.25) than the Neugroschen (new-groschen).

This happened at a time, when I was no longer blind and was already able to walk. I was neither born blind, nor was I inflicted with some kind of an inherited physical defect. Father and mother were indeed vigorous and healthy by nature. They have never been sick throughout their lives. To accuse me of atavistic frailties is an act of malice, I have to reject most decisively.

That I fell seriously ill shortly after my birth, lost my eyesight, and was ailing for entire four years, was not the consequence of inheritance, but rather only due to the local conditions, the poverty, ignorance, and harmful quackery, the victim of which I became. As soon as I came into the hands of a capable physician, my eyesight returned, and I became a most sound and robust boy, who was strong enough to take on any other boy.

But, before I talk about myself, I have to devote some more time to the surroundings, in which I have spent my earliest childhood.

Along with the house, mother had also inherited the debts, associated with it. Interests had to be paid on them. Therefore, all we got out of it was that we had to pay interests instead of rent. Mother was economical, and father was so too in his own way. But just as he was excessive in everything, in his love, his rage, his work, his praise, his reprimand, so he was here as well in his assessment of that small inheritance, which could only be an incentive to continue saving money and to remove the debt from the house. But though he did not take to the belief he had suddenly become rich, he nonetheless presumed he could adopt a different lifestyle, now. He stopped spending his entire life toiling at the loom. After all, he had a house now, and he had money, lots of money. He could turn to something else, which was less strenuous, more worth while than weaving. While lying in his bed, being unable to sleep, and thinking about what he should

do, he heard the rats rumbling upstairs in the empty pigeonry. This rumble was repeated day by day, and so, in that manner well known to any psychologist, the decision ripened in him, to drive out the rats and to buy pigeons. He wanted to become a pigeon-dealer, though he knew nothing at all about this trade. He had been told that a lot of money could be made in this business, and was convinced that, even without the necessary special knowledge, he would possess enough intelligence to outsmart any other dealer.

The rats were driven out and pigeons were bought.

Unfortunately, this purchase could not be made without spending some money. Mother had to sacrifice one of her pouches, perhaps even two. She did it just reluctantly. The pigeons did not give her the same joy, they gave us children. Our greatest pleasure was to watch the dear animals changing their tender plumage.

Father had bought two pairs of very expensive “blue-striped”

pigeons. He brought them home and showed them to us. He hoped to make at least three taler of them. Some days later, the blue feathers lay on the ground: they had not been real, but had been glued on. The precious “blue-striped” pigeons turned out to be entirely worthless, common, white ones. Father purchased a very pretty, young, grey cock pigeon for one taler and fifteen good groschen. After a short time, the pigeon turned out to be blind of old age. He never left the pigeonry, his value was zero. Such and similar incidents occurred increasingly. The consequence of this was that mother had to sacrifice another pouch to really get the pigeon-trade going. Of course, father also tried his best.

He took no leisure-time. He attended all markets, all inns and bars in order to buy or to find buyers. One time he bought peas, another time vetches, he had obtained “almost for free”. He was always on the move, from one village to another, from one farmer to another. He constantly brought home cheese, eggs, and butter, we did not even need. He had bought them over price, just entice the farmers’ wives into a deal, and could only unload them with difficulties and at a loss. This restless, unprofitable life yielded no gain, but devoured the happiness of our home. It even ravaged the remaining linen pouches. Mother talked to him kindly, in vain. She worried and kept quiet, until it would have been a sin to bear it any longer. Then, she arrived at a decision and went to Judge Layritz, who

turned out to be much, much more reasonable in this case, than at that other time with our frogs.

She presented her case to him. She told him that she did love her husband very, very much, but had to consider primarily her children's wellbeing. She disclosed to him that she owned an additional pouch, she had not shown, but kept from her husband.

She asked the judge to be so kind to tell her how she should invest this money in order to achieve security for herself and her children. She presented him with the pouch. He opened it and counted. There were sixty hard, shiny, well polished talers.

This caused great astonishment! Judge Layritz thought about it, then he said: "My dear Mrs. May, I know you. You are a good woman, and I will vouch for you. Our midwife is old, we need a younger one. You will go to Dresden and spent your money there on becoming a midwife. I will arrange this! If you'll return with the highest marks, we will hire you right away. I'm giving you my word on this. But if you should return with lesser marks, we will not be able to use you. But now, go back home and tell your husband, he should come and see me right away, I'd have to talk with him!"

So it happened. Mother went to Dresden. She returned with the highest marks, and Judge Layritz kept his word; she was hired.

During her absence, father did all of the housework together with grandmother. This was a hard time, a time of suffering, for all of us. There was an outbreak of small-pox. All of us children became ill. Grandmother did almost more than was humanly possible; but father did so too. One of the sisters' head had turned into a shapeless lump on account of the small-pox.

Forehead, ears, eyes, nose, mouth, and chin had entirely disappeared. The physician had to probe for the lips with a knife, in order to feed the sick girl with at least some milk.

She is still alive today, the most cheerful one of us all, and has never been sick again. The scars are still visible, which resulted from the physician cutting her, while searching for her mouth.

These hard times were not entirely over yet, when mother returned, but her stay in Dresden brought a big stroke of good fortune for me. By her hard work and her quiet, deeply sincere ways, she had gained the favour of the two professors Grenzer and Haase, and had told them about me, her miserable, blinded, and yet spiritually so lively boy. She had been asked to bring me to Dresden, to be treated by these two physicians. This was now done, and with a quite remarkable success. I learnt to see, and returned home healthily in all other respects as well. But all of this required a large, large sacrifice; of course it was only large in respect to our poor conditions. Because of all of the necessary expenses, we had to sell the house, and the small part of the price we were to keep as our own was hardly sufficient to pay for the most urgent things. We moved to a rented place. -

And now, I will turn to that person, who had the most profound and extensive influence on my development in a spiritual respect.

While our mother's mother had been born in Hohenstein and was therefore called the "Hohensteiner grandmother" by us, my father's mother was from Ernstthal and therefore had to listen to the name "Ernstthaler grandmother". The latter was an entirely peculiar, inscrutable, noble, and, I might almost say, mysterious character.

She was to me, from my early youth on, a cherished, blissful puzzle, from the depth of which I could scoop up wisdom without ever running out of it. Where had she obtained all this from.

Very simple: She was a soul, nothing but a soul, and modern psychology knows what this means. She was born in the direst need and had grown up in the direst suffering; therefore, she regarded everything with hoping eyes, yearning for deliverance. And whoever is capable to hope and to believe the right way, has already pushed all the misery of earth aside and will only find sunshine and God's peace ahead. She was the daughter of miserably poor folks, had lost her mother at an early age, and to feed her father, who was neither able to stand nor to lie and was tied and bound to an old leather arm-chair for many years, until he died.



She took care of him with an endless self-denial, which would move a person to tears. Poverty allowed her only the cheapest of accommodations. Her chamber's window let her see only the cemetery, nothing else. She knew all of the graves, and thought there would only be one course for herself and her father, to be carried out of their humble dying chamber in a coffin towards the churchyard. She had one lover, who had decent and honest intentions, but she gave him up. She wanted to devote her entire time only to her father, and the good fellow agreed with her. He said nothing, but he waited and remained faithful to her.

Upstairs, in the attic, stood an old chest, containing even older books. These were heirlooms, bound in leather, of various contents, both religious and secular. It was told that there had been clerics, scholars, and travellers in our family, when it had been prosperous, of whom we are reminded up to this day by those books. Father and daughter were able to read, they had both learnt it by themselves. At nightfall, after the strife and work of the day was done, the Reifroeckchen [1] was lit, and one of them read to the other. Once in a while, a pause was made to discuss what had been read. Though having read the books almost twenty times already, they started over again and again, because every time, new ideas were found, which seemed to be better, more beautiful and also truer than those from before. Most frequently, a rather large and very worn-out volume was read, the title of which was:

[1] a small oil lamp

*The Hakawati*

*i.e.*

the story-teller in Asia, Africa, Turkia, Arabia, Persia, and India, including an appendix with interpretation, explanation &

interpretation, also many a comparison and images by

Christianus Kretschmann who was from Germania.

Printed by Wilhelmus Candidus A. D.: M. D. C. V.

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This book contained a large amount of meaningful, oriental tales, which were not to be found in any previous collection.

Grandmother knew all of these tales. Usually, she recited them literally, word by word, but in certain instances, whenever it deemed her necessary, she made alterations or added applications, from which became evident that she knew the spirit of the stories she told very well, and made precise use of its effect. Her favourite tale was the fable of Sitara. Later, it also became my favourite, because it dealt with the geography and ethnology of our earth and its inhabitants from a purely ethical point of view.

But let this just be a small indication, here.

The father died as a consequence of a series of hemorrhages.

Taking care of him was so exhausting that the daughter came close to death herself, but she survived it. After the time of mourning had passed, May, the faithful lover, came and took her on. Now finally, finally she was truly happy! It was a marriage, according to God's will. Two children were born, my father and a sister before him; she later suffered a serious fall and was crippled as a consequence of it. So you see, that we always had our share of afflictions, or rather tests of faith. And you can also see that I do not conceal anything. It must not be my intension, to embellish the ugly parts. But shortly after the birth of the second child, that sorrowful event occurred at Christmas time, I already told about. The good young man plunged at night with the bread into the deep, snowy ravine and froze to death. Grandmother and both of her children had nothing to eat during the Christmas holidays, and only found out after a long time of agony that she had lost her beloved husband, and under such dreadful circumstances. Hereafter came years of mourning and then the hard times of the Napoleonic wars and of famine.

Everything was devastated. No work could be found anywhere.

Inflation grew; hunger raged. A poor, young journeyman came to beg. Grandmother could not give him anything. She did not even have a single piece of bread for herself and her children. He saw that she was silently weeping. This aroused his compassion. He left and returned after more than one hour. He poured out before her, whatever he had got, pieces of bread, a dozen potatoes, a rutabaga, a small, very ancient cheese, a small bag of flour, an equally small bag of barley, a thin slice of sausage, and a tiny piece of mutton-suet. Then, he swiftly went away to avoid her gratitude. She never saw him again; but there is one who knows him for sure and will not forget him. This one sent even more and better help. The wife of a head forester had died. He lived outside of the town and was known to be as prosperous as he was kind-hearted. His wife had left him with a very large number of children. He wished to employ grandmother as a housekeeper. In this time of need, she would have liked to accept just too well, but declared that she could not possibly part with her own children, even if she found a place to house them. It did not take the good man long to decide. He declared to her, he would not care whether six or eight children ate at his house; they would all be fed. She should just come, not without them, but with them. This saved her from the direst need!

The stay in the quiet, lonely house of the forester was doing the mother and her children a world of good. They grew healthier and stronger from the better nutrition. The head forester saw grandmother doing her best to show her gratitude and to gain his satisfaction. She worked almost more than her strength would allow, but felt good about it. He quietly observed this and rewarded her by granting her children, in every respect, the same things his own children received. Surely, he was an aristocrat and basically proud. He ate alone with his mother-in-law.

Grandmother was just a servant, yet she did not eat in the servant's, but the children's room. But when, after some time, he had gained an insight into the peculiar world of her soul, he cared for her spiritual wellbeing as well. He eased the heavy burden of her work, allowed her to read to him and his mother-in-law from her books in the evenings, and permitted her then to look at his own books as well. How much did she enjoy this! And he had such good, such useful books!

The children had, in reasonable limits, a free life. They chased each other through the forest and got strong limbs and red cheeks.

Little May was the youngest and smallest of them all, but he joined the others with all of his energy. And he paid attention; he learnt and remembered. He wanted to know everything. He asked about every object he did not know yet. Soon, he knew the names of all plants, all caterpillars and worms, all bugs and butterflies, which existed in his realm. He sought to familiarise himself with their character, their properties and habits.

This zest for knowledge, gained him the head forester's special affections, who did not even regard it beneath him, to allow the boy to accompany him. I have to mention this, so that later events become understandable. The following relapse from this sunny, hopeful time of his boyhood into the previous poverty and wretchedness could not possibly have had a positive effect on the boy.

It was at this time that, during lunch, grandmother suddenly fell from her chair and dropped dead to the floor. The whole house became very excited. The physician was called. He diagnosed a heart attack and stated that grandmother was dead and had to be buried within three days. But she was alive. Yet, she could not move a single limb, not even her lips or the not entirely closed eyelids. She saw and heard everything, the weeping, the lamentations for her. She understood every word that was spoken.

She saw and heard the carpenter, who came to take her measurements for the coffin. When it was done, she was placed into it and put into a cold chamber. On the day of the burial, she was laid out in the corridor. The pall bearers came, the minister and the cantor with the students' choir. The family started to bid its farewell to her who appeared to be dead. Just imagine their agony! For three days and three nights, she had made every effort, to show by any kind of movement that she was still alive -

- in vain! Now, the last moment had come, when she could still be saved. Once the coffin had been closed, there was no hope left.

Later, she told that in her terrible mortal fear, she had made efforts, quite beyond what is humanly possible, to at least wiggle one finger, when one after another came by to hold her hand for the last time. So also did the head forester's

youngest girl, who had always felt particularly close to grandmother. Suddenly, the child startled and screamed: "She has grabbed my hand; she wants to hold on to me!" And really, everyone saw the seemingly deceased, alternately opening and closing her hand in a slow motion. The funeral was, of course, called off immediately.

Other physicians were brought in; grandmother was saved. But from then on, the way she led her life was even graver and more uplifted than before. Just rarely, she talked about what she had thought and felt in those unforgettable three days on the threshold between life and death. It must have been horrible.

But this also just served to strengthen her faith in God and to deepen her confidence in Him. Just as her death had been unreal, from now on she also regarded the so-called actual death as equally unreal, and for many years she sought the right ideas to explain and to prove this. It is thanks to her and her false death that I in general only believe in life, but not in death.

Before she was mentally quite over this experience, grandmother and her two children were hurled back into their previous way of life, on account of the head forester being assigned to another district and getting remarried. She returned to Ernstthal, and again had to earn her living penny by penny. A good man, Vogel by name and also a weaver by trade, proposed to her. Everyone kept urging her, she had to give her children a new father; she owed them that much. She did it, and had no cause to regret it, but unfortunately, she became once more a widow after just a short time. He died and left her everything he owned: poverty and the reputation of a good, hard working man. Hereafter, her life became quiet and even quieter. She got her girl a place with a seamstress, and her boy was sent to a weaver, who kept him working at the reel from dawn to dusk. After all, it was now taken for granted that the boy had to become nothing but a weaver, though he had definitely lost all interest in it during his stay at the forester's house. He had already gained an entirely different image of himself, and it is surely understandable that later, after having been forced into this unloved craft, he got the idea to free himself from it again by means of the pigeon-trade.

Nevertheless, he did his duty, both as a boy and as an adolescent.

He worked hard and became a capable weaver, whose merchandise turned out so

clean and accurate that every businessman liked to have him work for him. But, in this leisure-time, he strolled through forests and meadows, to collect plants and to keep all the knowledge he had gained at the head forester's fast in his memory.

Therefore he took great pleasure from the fact that among the previously mentioned inheritance of our mother there were also some old, most interesting books, the contents of which turned out to be of great benefit to him in these leisure-time activities.

Here, I am particularly thinking of a large, thick folio, which had about a thousand pages and bore the following title: Herbal Book Of the most learned and worldwide famous Dr. Petri Andreae Matthioli. Now again with many beautiful new illustrations, useful medicine also, and other good pieces, for the third time with particular effort enlarged and printed, by

Joachimum Camerarium, Doctor of medicine at the praiseworthy city of Nuernberg.

With three, well ordered, useful registers of herbs' Latin and German names, and then the medicine, with the usage of the same included. Also ample information, on distilling and kilns.

With special privilege of His Roman Imperial Majesty, not to be copied in any format.

Printed in Frankfurt am Main, M. D. C.

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It was the most natural thing in the world for father to immediately take this book and to study it eagerly. It contained even more than the title promised. For instance, the names of the plants were often also given in French, English, Russian, Bohemian, Italian, and even in Arabic, which later helped me in particular to a quite extraordinary degree. Father also turned from one page of this delightful book to another, from one plant to another. He added much, much more to the knowledge, he already had; not just about the flora itself, but also about its nutritious and technical properties and its healing effects. The ancestors

had tested these effects and had added very many marginal notes to the volume, telling about the results of these tests. Later, this book became a source of the purest and most natural pleasure for me, and I may well say that father excellently supported me in this.

Another one of these books was a collection of biblical woodcuts, probably from the earliest time of the xylographic art. I own it, just like the Herbal Book, up to this day. It contains very many, quite excellent pictures; some are unfortunately missing. The first one is Moses and the last one the beast from the eleventh chapter of the Revelation of John. The title page has been lost.

Therefore, I do not know who the author is or in what year this volume was printed. Grandmother used this book as an aid when telling us the biblical stories. We immensely enjoyed every one of these tales, and this brings me to most outstanding quality, grandmother possessed for us children, this was her incomparable gift for story-telling.

Actually, what grandmother did was not that much story-telling as it was creating, drawing, painting, shaping. Even the toughest subject-matter gained shape and colour, being told by her lips.

And when twenty persons listened to her, every single one of these twenty had the impression that she told what she told quite exclusively for him alone. And it stuck, it lasted. Whether she related a passage from the Bible or from the vast realm of her fairy-tales, it always culminated to some profound insight in the relationship between heaven and earth, the victory of good over evil, and the warning that everything on earth was just a parable, because the source of truth was not to be found in this low form of life, but only in a higher existence. I am convinced that she did not do this consciously and with the full intension; she was not sufficiently educated for this, but it was a inborn gift, a genius, and such a beneficial spirit will, as is well known, do its work most surely, when it is neither discovered nor observed.

Grandmother was a poor, uneducated woman, but nevertheless a poet with a god-given talent, and therefore a stroy-teller, who created characters from the wealth of her stories, which not just existed in those stories, but truly came alive.

Thinking back at my earliest memory, I do not come across the fable of Sitara first, but rather the fable “of the lost and forgotten human soul”. I felt such endless pity for this soul. I have wept for it with my blind, unseeing eyes of a child. To me, this tale contained nothing but truth. But only years later, after I had experienced how life could treat a person and after I had extensively delved into the the heart of mankind, I realized that the knowledge of the human soul had indeed been lost and forgotten and that all of our psychology had not yet been able to return this knowledge to us. In my childhood, I have spent hours sitting quietly and motionlessly, staring into the darkness of my sick eyes, to contemplate where this lost and forgotten soul might have ended up. I really, really wanted to find it. Then, grandmother took me on her lap, kissed me on the forehead and said: “Be quiet, my boy! Don’t be sad for it! I have found it.

It is here!” “Where?”, I asked. “Here with me”, she answered.

“You are this soul, you!” “But I am not lost”, I objected. “Of course, you are lost. You have been cast down into the poorest, dirtiest Ardistan. But you will be found; because even when everybody and all have forgotten about you, God has not forgotten about you.” - I did not comprehend this, then; I only understood it later, much, much later. Actually, in this time of my early childhood, every living being was just a soul to me, nothing but a soul. I saw nothing. To me, there were neither appearances nor shapes, nor colours, neither locations nor movement from one location to another. I was very well able to feel, hear, and smell the persons and objects, but this was not enough to picture them truly and vividly. I could only imagine them. I did not know how a person, a dog, a table would look like; I could only picture it in my soul, and this picture reflected its soul.

Whenever somebody spoke, I did not hear his body, but his soul.

Not his external, but his internal appearance approached me. To me, there were only souls, nothing but souls. And so it has continued to be, even after I had learnt to see, from my boyhood on, up to this day. This is the difference between myself and others. This is the key to my books. This is the explanation for everything which has been praised or condemned in me. Only he who had been blind and became seeing again, and only he who possessed such a deeply rooted and powerful world within himself that it, even after he became seeing, dominated the world outside for his entire life, only he will be able to put



himself in my place and understand everything what I was planning, what I did, and what I wrote, and only he will have the ability to criticise me, *nobody*

*else!*

I spent the entire day not with my parents, but with grandmother.

She meant everything to me. She was my father, my mother, my teacher, my light, my sunshine which my eyes lacked. Everything that became a part of me, physically and mentally, I got from her.

Thus, I most naturally came to resemble her. Whatever she told me, I told back to her, adding what my youthful imagination partially guessed, partially grasped. I told it to my sisters and to others who came to me, because I could not come to them. I told it in grandmother's tone of voice, with her confidence that left no room for any doubt. This sounded precociously and convincingly. It gave me the nimbus of a child well beyond his age in intelligence. Thus, adults came as well, to listen to me, and I might have degenerated into an oracle or miracle child, if grandmother had not been so very modest, truthful, and intelligent, to intervene wherever any kind of danger arose to me.

A blind child is given little work. He has more time to think and ponder, than other children. So, he might easily appear more intelligent than he is. Unfortunately, father did not possess grandmother's intelligent modesty, nor mother's silent thoughtfulness. He enjoyed talking very much and exaggerated, as we already know, in everything he did and said. So it happened that this fate, which I escaped here, later, nevertheless, was to come over me, that awful fate, to be praised to death.

When I learnt to see, my inner self was already developed and fixed in its later major features to such an extent that even the world of light, opening now before my eyes, did not possess the power to draw the centre of my inner being outside towards it. I remained a child for all times, just turning into an older child, the older I grew; I remained a child in which the soul dominated and still dominates today, so that no consideration for the world outside and the physical life could ever keep me from doing something, what I have found to be right for the soul.

And in all of my life, I have incessantly made the experience that with entire peoples it is in no way different than with me. They preferably act not due to external causes, but on account of themselves, their souls. The greatest and most beautiful deeds of a nation were born out of its inner self. And no matter how strong and how inventive a poet's mind might be, he would still never succeed in forcing the plot of a great, national drama upon the history of a people, if it was not already in the people's soul. And even if we would found hundreds of associations and commissions of authors of books for young people and thousands of libraries for children, students, and the general public, we will arrive at the opposite of what we intent, if we choose books which only satisfy the needs of our pedantry and our methodics, but not the needs of those souls, upon which we force them. I have come to know these souls, have studied them since the time of my youth.

I have been such a soul myself, and am it even still today.

Therefore I know that the general public and the younger generation must not be given books full of paragons of virtue, simply because there is no person who is a paragon of virtue. The reader wants truth, wants real life. He hates the virtuous dummies, which always stay where they were once placed, possess neither flesh nor blood, and are only clothed in whatever that dress-maker called "textbook morality" has dressed them up with, and nothing more. The task of an author writing for a young audience does not consist of the creation of characters who act so exceedingly delightfully impeccable in every situation that the reader necessarily has to get bored by them, but such an author's art is rather to allow his characters to commit all those errors and stupidities, he wants to save his youthful readers from. It is a thousand times better he would let his fictional characters perish, than to have the disgruntled boy transfer the evil, which did not occur, though it should have occurred in all truthfulness, from the book into the real life. This is the axis around which our literature for the youth and the general public has to revolve. Exemplary boys and men are bad role-models; they repel.

Show the negative, but true to life and thrilling, thus you will achieve the positive.

After we had moved into a rented place, we lived at the market, with the church

in its centre. This square was the children's favourite playground. In the evenings, the older school-boys gathered at the church gate to tell stories. This was a most exclusive club. Not everyone was allowed to go there. When someone came, they did not like, they made no fuss; he was sent away with a thrashing and surely would not return. I, on the other hand, did not come, nor did I ask, but rather I was invited in, though I was only five years old, while the others were thirteen and fourteen. What an honour! Such a thing had never happened before! I had grandmother and her tales to thank for this! At first, I kept quiet and just listened, until I knew all of the tales which were going around here. They did not hold it against me, because I had learnt to see only a short time ago, kept my eyes still half bandaged, and was treated with some consideration by everyone. But once this was over, I had to take my turn. Every day another fairy-tale, another story, another narration. This was asking much, very much, but I delivered, and with pleasure. Grandmother worked with me. What I was to tell at dusk, we worked out in the early mornings, even before we ate our morning soup. Then, I was well prepared when I reached the church gate. Our beautiful book, "The Hakawati", supplied our stories for a long time. On top of it, this stock of stories increased quite extraordinarily over time, of course not in the book, but in me. This was the very simple and natural consequence of me having to translate, after I had become seeing, the world of my soul, generated by the Hakawati in me, into the visible world of colours, shapes, bodies, and surfaces. By this, innumerable variations and multiplications were created, which I could only put into a fixed shape and form by telling them.

By this time, father had managed to get me the permission to attend school. Normally this permission was only granted after the age of six; but my mother was, in her capacity as a midwife, in frequent contact with the minister, who enjoyed granting her this wish, since he also served as the local school inspector, and father met the elementary school teacher Schulze twice a week to play skat or schafkopf [a], and therefore it did not turn out to be difficult to obtain his permission as well. I learnt to read and write very quickly, because father and grandmother helped with it, and then, once I could do this, father thought the time had come to start carrying out the plans he had for me. He wanted to fulfil in me what was not fulfilled in him. At the forester's house, he had been granted a glimpse at better and more humane conditions. And he was always haunted by the idea that there had been important men among our ancestors, about whom we, their descendants, had to say that we were not worthy of them. He wanted to

live up to their example, but was violently pushed down by the circumstances. This offended and annoyed him. For himself, he had settled with these circumstances. He had to remain what he was: a poor, uneducated craftsman. But now, he transferred all of his wishes, hopes, and everything else onto me.

And he was resolved to do everything possible and not to miss any opportunity to turn me into the man he had been denied to become.

This can surely only be regarded as a commendable act of his. But the important thing was what path and manner he gave to my education. He wanted whatever was good and beneficent to me. He could only achieve this with good and beneficent means. But unfortunately, I have to say, without telling too much about future events, that my “childhood” came to an end now, at the age of five. It died in the very moment when I opened my eyes to see.

What those poor eyes got to see from then on up to today, was nothing but work and work again, worry and worry again, suffering and suffering again, up to my present agony, like being tied to a stake and being incessantly tortured without any end being in sight. - - -

[a] Skat, Schafkopf: Two popular games of cards. The word “Skat” is derived from the Italian “scarto” (discarding cards), and “Schafkopf” means literally “sheep’s head”.

### III. No Boyhood

Oh dear, beautiful, golden time of youth! How often have I seen you, how often have I found joy in you! With others, always just with others! You have never been with me. You steered clear of me, keeping in a far, far distance. I was not envious, truly not, because there is no room in me for envy at all, but it hurt nonetheless, when I saw the sunshine warming other people’s lives, while I stood in the most remote, cold corner of the shadows.

Yet, I also had a heart, I also yearned for light and warmth. But even the poorest

of all lives requires love, and if this most poor one is sufficiently determined, he can become richer than the rich. He just has to search within himself. There, he will find what fate has denied him, and can pass it out to all, all of those who give him nothing. For truly, truly, it is better to be poor and nevertheless giving, than to be rich and nevertheless do always nothing but receiving!

I guess, this is the right place to clarify a misconception about me from the very start. This is that I am regarded as very rich, a millionaire even; but I am no such thing. Until now, I had just enough “to get along comfortably”, nothing more. Even this is most likely to come to an end soon, since the relentless attacks against me will eventually bring about, what was to be brought about by them all along. I am getting used to the idea that I will die just as I was born, as a poor man without any possessions. But this does not matter. This is just externally.

This cannot change any part of my inner self and its future.

The lie that I was a millionaire, that my income had amounted to 180.000 marks, was invented by a tricky and very intelligently calculating opponent, who possesses a keen knowledge of human nature, and would not hesitate for a moment to use this knowledge, even if his own conscience should urge him otherwise, to obtain profit and advantages. He knew very well what he did, when placing his lie into the newspapers. By this, he stirred up the very lowest and ultimately worst enemy against me: envy. The previous attacks against me hardly matter any more, now; but since I am believed to be in the possession of millions, I am assaulted quite mercilessly and pitilessly. Even in the articles of otherwise rather respectable and humane critics, this financial vindictiveness plays a part. It causes a boundless feeling of embarrassment to see people, who have proven themselves as courteous knights of literature in every other case, riding around on this vulgar horse! I own a house, not encumbered with debts, I live in, as well as a small amount of money I keep saved for my travels, nothing else. I am left with nothing of my income. It is just barely enough for my modest household and for the hard sacrifices I have to make for the lawsuits I have been forced into. In the past, I could follow my heart and be giving to the poor, especially to poor readers of my books. This has stopped now. Nonetheless, I am now, more than ever, pestered by letters demanding money from me, on account

of this cunning lie of being a millionaire, but unfortunately I cannot help any more, and almost everyone I have to turn away, feels disappointed and becomes my enemy. I conclude that this unscrupulous act of depicting me as a filthy rich man, has harmed me more, much more than all adverse criticism and other hostilities put together.

After this digression, which I deemed necessary, I will now turn back to the “boyhood” of this alleged “millionaire”, who seeks such a very different kind of treasure than all those who aim to exploit him.

It had been a dreadful time, especially for the poor inhabitants of that area where I was at home. Living in the present times of prosperity, it is almost impossible to imagine how miserably people starved through their days in the end of the 1840s.

Unemployment, deformity, inflation, and revolution, these four words explain it all. We lacked almost everything that is required for the body's sustenance and relief. At lunchtime, we asked our neighbour, the innkeeper of the inn called “Zur Stadt Glauchau” <The City of Glauchau's>, for the potato peelings, to use the few scraps that might still be attached to them for a hunger-soup. We went to the “Red Mill”, where we got a handful of dust from the empty bags and the spelt that had been thrown out for free, to turn it into something resembling food. We plucked atriplex [a] from the rubble dumps, otterzungen [b] from the ridges of the fields, and wild lettuce from the fences, to cook it and to fill our stomachs with it. The leaves of the atriplex felt greasy. This resulted in two or three little drops of fat floating on the surface of the water, when they were cooked. How nutritious and how delicious did this seem to us! Luckily, there were also a few stocking-weavers among the many unemployed weavers of our town, whose business had not stopped entirely. They wove gloves, these extremely cheap, white gloves, corpses are dressed up with, before they are buried. Mother succeeded in getting the job of sewing such burial-gloves together. There we sat, all of us except father, from early in the morning until late at night, stitching away. Mother sewed the thumbs, for this was difficult, grandmother sewed the sides with little finger, and I, together with my sisters, sewed the middle fingers. When we had all worked very hard, we had all together earned eleven or even

twelve new-groschen by the end of the week. What a financial stock! For this, we got beetroot-syrup for five pfennig, spread on five tiny rolls of bread; these were very conscientiously divided into pieces and passed around. It was just as much a reward for the past week as it was an incentive for the next.

[a] Melde = atriplex: some kind of a weed from the goosefoot family (chenopodiaceae), also known as orach or orache in English.

[b] Otterzungen: Germany's most respected dictionary, the "Duden", defines this as a "petrified fish-tooth". This seems a bit strange to me. I would rather guess that it must be some kind of a plant. Literally it would mean "adders'

tongues".

While we were busily working at home in this manner, father was just as busy outside; but unfortunately his work was of that kind which yields more honour than sustenance. He joined the effort to save king Frederic August and the entire Saxonian government from certain ruin. Just a short time ago, public opinion had demanded the very opposite: The king was to be dethroned, and the government to be chased out of the country. This was desired by almost all of Saxony, but in Hohenstein and Ernstthal, minds soon changed, and did so for the most excellent reasons: It was too dangerous! Those who were screaming the loudest had joined together and ransacked a bakery. Then, came the Santa Hermandad [a] and locked them all up. They regarded themselves as victims and martyrs of politics for a few days though, great and powerful, but their wives were not interested in this kind of heroism; they fought it all the way. They met; they parted; they ran up and down; they convinced the other women; they talked politically, diplomatically, threateningly, beggingly.

Calm, reasonable men joined them. The old, venerable, minister Schmidt made speeches for peace; and Judge Layritz, too. The policeman Eberhardt went from house to house, warning people of the terrible consequences of a rebellion; police-sergeant Grabner supported him in this. At the church gate, at dusk, the boys only told stories about being shot, being hanged, and especially about the scaffold, which was described in such a manner that everyone hearing it reached for the front or back of his neck. So it came about that the mood changed quite

thoroughly. Dethroning the king was now entirely out of the question. On the contrary, he had to stay, for there could not be a better one than him anywhere in the world. From now on, the object was no longer to drive him out, but rather to protect him. Meetings were held to discuss in what manner this could best be achieved; and since there was talk of fighting, war, and victory all over the place, it came quite naturally that we boys, also, increasingly put ourselves not just in a militant mood, but also in militant clothes, and imagined ourselves in acts of militant heroism. Granted, I did all of this only from a distance, because I was too small for this and had no time; I had to sew gloves. But all the other boys and girls were standing together in all kinds of corners and niches, telling each other what they had heard at home when they were with their parents, and had most important discussions about the manner in which the monarchy was to be preserved and the republic was to be prevented. They were particularly outraged at some old, evil woman. She was to be blamed for everything. Her name was Anarchy, and she lived in the deepest forest; but at night, she came into the towns, to tear down the houses and to burn down the barns; what a beast! Luckily, all of our fathers were heroes, no one of them was afraid of anybody, not even of this boorish Anarchy. It was decided to put all citizens in arms for king and fatherland. In Ernstthal, there had been, for a long time, a company of riflemen and a company of guardsmen. The first shot at a wooden bird and the latter at a wooden disk. In addition to these two, two or three other companies were to be founded, especially a Polish company of scythe-men, to stab the enemy to death from a large distance. And so it turned out, then, that in our little town there was an unusually large number of people with an immensely militant disposition, for both strategical and tactical planning. Every one of them was in great demand. They were counted. There were thirty-three of them. This suited very well and worked out rather smoothly, because: Each company needed one captain, one first lieutenant, and one second lieutenant; if, in addition to the riflemen and the guard, nine new companies were to be founded, this added up to eleven and all thirty-three officers were taken care of. This suggestion was carried out, which of course meant that the number of men in the individual companies could only be rather small; but the drum-major, the master [b] stocking-weaver Loeser, who had served in the military and therefore had to train all thirty-three officers, maintained that this could only be advantageous, because the fewer men there were in a company, the fewer could be shot down and lost from that company in a war; and so the decision was left as it was.



[a] Spanish for “holy brotherhood”, an alliance of Spanish cities with their own jurisdiction and police-force. I suppose, the term is used figuratively here.

[b] Meister: a craftsman who has passed a special examination before the chamber of handicrafts, which gives him the right to own a business and to train others in that craft.

My father was the captain of the seventh company. He got a sabre and a signal-whistle; but he was not content with this rank; he had his sights on a higher position. Therefore, he decided that, once he had finished his training, he would secretly, without letting anybody know of it, practice his skills in the “higher command”. And since he had chosen me to assist him in this, I was, for the time being, relieved from sewing gloves, and joined him daily for a walk to the forest, where, on a meadow entirely surrounded by bushes and trees, our secret evolution took place.

Father changed from a lieutenant, to a captain, a colonel, and a general, while I was the entire Saxonian army. I was first trained as a platoon, then as an entire company. Thereafter, I became a battalion, a regiment, a brigade, and a division. I had to ride as well as run, forwards as well as backwards, to the right and to the left, advance and retreat. Though I was not dumb and was eagerly and lovingly engaged in the matter, I was nevertheless still rather young and small; and so you might imagine, considering the unpredictable nature of my general’s moods, that it was impossible for me to develop within such a short time from a simple, small squad into a complete and powerful army, without having experienced the severity of military discipline firsthand. But I did not cry at any punishment; I was too proud for that. There is no such thing as a crying Saxonian army! Furthermore, the reward also came swiftly. When father had become a vice-commander, he said to me: “My boy, you’ve had a large part in this. I’ll build a drum for you. You shall be an army-drummer!” I was so happy! And there were moments when I was really convinced that I had received all those slaps, pushes, blows, and head-punches only for the benefit and safety of the king of Saxony and his cabinet! If he only knew!

I got my drum, because father always kept his word. Master plumber Leistner,

who had his shop at the market of Hohenstein, helped him in building it. It was a solo drum and had turned out very well; it still exists today. Later, when I had grown a bit older, but still being a boy, I had been a drummer for the seventh company; I will have mention this drum once again at a later point. The eleven companies performed their duty. They trained almost daily, having more than enough time on their hands, since there was no work. How we were nevertheless able to exist and what kept us from starvation, I can no longer recall today; it strikes me like a miracle. In other places, they were also out to “save the king”. They were in contact with one another and had decided to get on their way to Dresden, as soon as the order was given, and to risk everything for the king, possibly even their lives. And on one beautiful day it came, that order. The bugles sounded; the drums were rolled. From every door, the heroes rushed forward, to gather on the market place. The master butcher Haase was the regiment’s adjutant. He had borrowed a horse and sat right on top of it. It was no easy job for him to go between the commander, the vice-commander, and the captains, because the horse constantly disagreed with its rider. Judge Layritz’s wife draped her windows with a table-cloth and her Sunday saloppe [a].

This was our show of colours. Whoever had something that could serve this purpose did what she had done. By this, the market place gained a festive, joyful face. All around there was nothing enthusiasm. Not even a hint of a sad farewell! No one felt the need to bid his wife and children a special farewell. Only exclamations of joy, a triple cheer, vivat, “hurray” all over the place! The commander had a speech, followed by grand flourish of the wind-instruments and the drums. Then came the commands of the individual captains: “Attention -

- eyes right, rrrright dress -

- eyes frrront - - order arms - - raise arms - - present arms - -  
shoulder arms - - turn rrrright - - forward, marsh!” The adjutant led the way on the borrowed horse, followed by the musicians with the Turkish crescent and the drummers; then came the commander and the vice-commander, thereafter the riflemen, the guard, and the nine other companies; thus, the entire host marched, left, right - left, right, leaving town by the alleyway, which was then called “Hintergasse” <Rear Alley>, passing by the coalpit’s pond, the same one which had been entrusted with our frogs, marching on to Wuestenbrand, to reach the capitol via Chemnitz and Freiberg.

A crowd of friends and relatives followed in their train, to escort the courageous

troops up to the border of the small town's jurisdiction. But I was with a man I held particularly dear, Cantor Strauch, who was our neighbour; we stood in the door of his house, together with Friederike, his wife, who was a sister of Judge Layritz. They had no children, and I had been called upon to run many a small errand for them. I worshipped him endlessly; but she was repugnant to me, because the only reward I ever got from her for all of my errands were rotten apples or mushy pears; she also did not permit her husband to smoke more than two cigars, at two pfennig a piece, per month. I had to get them for him from the grocer, because he was ashamed of buying such cheap cigars for himself, and he smoked them in the yard, because Friederike could not stand the smell of tobacco. He was also truly delighted today by the sight of our troops. Watching them leaving, he said: [a] Saloppe: I have no idea what this word means.

“Yes, there is something great, something noble in this kind of enthusiasm for God, king, and fatherland!”

“But what does one get out of it?” asked the cantor's wife.

“Bliss is what you get out of it, the genuine, the true kind of bliss!”

With these words, he entered the house; he did not like to argue.

I went to our yard. There stood a French apple-tree [a]. I sat in its shade and thought about what the cantor had said. So the true kind of bliss was to be found in these words: God, king, and fatherland; I wanted and had to remember that! Later, experience has reshaped and ground down these words for me; but though they might have altered their shapes, the inner essence has remained.

[a] Franzaepfelbaum: A small kind of apple-tree with hardly any trunk, first grown in France.

Of all those who had moved out today, to perform great heroic deeds, the borrowed horse was first to return. The adjutant had handed it over to a currier, who brought it home, because walking was much healthier than riding, and because the rider did not have enough money saved to replace the horse, in case it would be injured or even shot dead in a fight. The master weaver Kretzschmar followed in the evening. He maintained that he could not have walked any further with his flat-feet; this was a natural defect, beyond his control. After dark, a few others turned up as well, who were dismissed for urgent reasons, bringing news that our corps had put up camp beyond Chemnitz, near Oederan, and that spies had been sent to Freiberg to investigate the battle-field there. In the morning, the surprising, but not at all sad, news arrived that they had been instructed at Freiberg to turn around immediately; they were not needed at all, since the Prussians had moved into Dresden, and therefore, there was not even the slightest danger for the king and the government any more. You can easily imagine that there was no school and no work on that day. I also refused to stitch any gloves. I simply ran away and joined those brave boys and girls, who were to form eleven companies and move out to meet their returning fathers on the way. This plan was carried out. We made our camp at the lakes of Wuestenbrand, and as soon those whom we were waiting for came, we marched with them to the sound of music and the beating of the drums, down the mountain at the rifle-house, where our orphaned wives and mothers stood, to welcome all of us, tall and small, some of them moved to tears, some laughing with joy.

Why do I tell all of this at such length? Because of the deep impression it has made upon me. I have to point out the sources from which the causes of my fate have flown out and joined. The reason why I never wavered for a single moment in my faith in God, in spite of everything that happened later, and why even when fate hurled the rocky tablets of the law at me, I did not lose any part of my respect for that law, is partially rooted in myself, but also partially in those small events of my early boyhood, which all had a more or less marked effect on me. I never forgot those words of my old, dear cantor, which have not just become flesh and blood, but also mind and soul for me.

After this excitement, life returned to its calm previous course.

Again, I sewed gloves and went back to school. But father was not satisfied with this school. I was to learn more that what an elementary school education had to offer in those days. My voice developed into a good, resounding, versatile soprano. Therefore, the cantor took me into the students' choir. Soon, I learnt to hit every pitch and grew self-confident before an audience. So it came that I was trusted to sing the solos in church after just a short time. The congregation was poor; they did not have the money to buy expensive sheet-music. The cantor had to copy it manually and I helped him. Wherever this was not appropriate, he composed himself. And he was a composer! And what a composer!

But he was from the small, unassuming village of Mittelbach, the son of mortally poor, uneducated parents, he had literally starved his way through music-school, and before he became teacher and cantor his only clothes were a blue linen jacket and a pair of blue linen trousers, he regarded one taler as a fortune, which could support him for weeks. This poverty had deprived him of his self-esteem. He did not know how to make his opinions count.

Everything was good enough for him. Being an quite excellent organist, pianist, and violinist, he could also compose for any other musical instrument, and he could have swiftly gained fame and fortune, if he had only possessed more self-confidence and courage. Everyone knew: Wherever in Saxony and across the border a new organ was put into service, there cantor Strauch of Ernstthal was sure to appear, to get acquainted with it and to seek the opportunity to play it once. This was the only pleasure he allowed himself. That is because he did not just lack the guts to seek a higher position than that of cantor in Ernstthal, but most of all he lacked the permission of his very strict wife Friederike, who had been a prosperous girl and therefore dominated the marriage like a thirty-two foot "principal" [a], while the cantor was only allowed the voice of a soft "vox humana".

Together with her brother, she owned several orchards, and their harvest was exploited down to the last fruit, and as I already mentioned, I only got rotten or mushy apples and pears from her.

But she always succeeded in making a face as if she was giving away an entire kingdom. She did not have the slightest concept of her husbands immensely great worth, both as a person and as an artist. She was tied to her orchards, and

he was therefore tied to Ernstthal. She did not care about his mental existence and his spiritual needs. She never opened a single one of his books and his many compositions disappeared, as soon as they were finished, at the very bottom of those dusty chests in the attic. After he had died, she had sold all of it as waste-paper to the paper-mill without me being able to prevent it, because I was not at home.

What a deep misery, almost beyond an outsider's comprehension, is this to be tied for an entire lifetime to such a female, who only exists in the lowest spheres and prevents even the most talented, or even ingenious, husband from reaching those better heights, this is beyond words. My old cantor could only bear this misery, because he possessed this immense ability to accept whatever life would bring, supplemented by a kind-heartedness which could never forget that he was just a poor devil, but that Friederike was a rich girl and also the sister of the town's judge.

[a] The main register of an organ, usually eight feet tall.

Later, he taught me to play the organ, the piano, and the violin.

I have already said that father made the bow to go with the violin himself. These lessons were most naturally for free, since my parents were too poor to pay for them. His strict wife Friederike did not agree with that at all. The organ lessons were given in church and the violin lessons at school; the cantor's wife could not do anything about that. But the piano was in the living-room, and when I came knocking at the door, to ask about it, nine out of ten times the cantor came out with the answer: "There is no lesson today, dear Karl. My wife Friederike can't abide it; she has a migraine." Sometimes, I was even told "she has vapeurs" [a].

I did not know what that was, but regarded it as something even worse than that other thing I also knew nothing about, that migraine. But I still felt uneasy about the fact that it only occurred whenever I came to play the piano. The kind cantor amended this loss by also giving me an introduction to harmonics, whenever there was an opportunity; there was no need for Friederike to find out about this, but this was in the later time of my boyhood, and I am not quite there, yet.

[a] Vapeurs: gas or hysteric mood-swings (French) As my father was impatient in all things, he was so too in regard to what he called my “education”. Mind you, he “educated” me; he cared less for my sisters. He had placed all of his hopes in me achieving in life, what he could not achieve, which was to obtain not just a happier, but also a mentally higher position in life.

In this respect, I have to praise him for at least that much that, in spite of regarding the wish for a so-called good income as the most immediate priority, he saw the greater value in a sound development of the personality in a mental respect. He felt this in his innermost soul to a larger extent and more clearly, than he was able to express in words. I was to become an educated, possibly even a highly educated, man, able to achieve something for the general wellbeing of humanity; this was his most heartfelt wish, though he might not have expressed it in these words, but differently. It is plain to see that he was asking a lot, but this was no impudence on his part, but rather he always believed in his wishes, and was fully convinced he could realize them. But unfortunately, he was uncertain of the ways and means for achieving this goal, and he underestimated the huge obstacles, opposing his plan. He was willing to make every, even the greatest, sacrifice, but he did not consider that even the very greatest sacrifice of a poor devil does not carry the weight of one gramme, one quentchen [a] against the opposition of the general circumstances. And most of all, he never even suspected that it took quite a different man than him for directing someone towards such goals. He was of the opinion that, most of all, I had to learn as much as possible, as quickly as possible, and all of his actions were aiming at this with the greatest energy.

[a] Quentchen: An outdated German unit of measurement, 3.6515 g, sometimes also a bit less.

I entered school at the age of five, which ended at the age of fourteen. Learning was easy for me. I quickly caught up with my two years older sister. Then, used school books were bought from older boys. At home, I had to solve the problems, they had been given in school. Thus, I soon became a stranger to my

grade, a severe psychological calamity for such a small, soft human child, which was of course mostly beyond father's comprehension. I believe that even the teachers did not suspect what a severe mistake had been committed here. They just assumed without much thought that a boy who cannot be taught anything new in his grade simply had to be promoted to the next one in spite of his youth.

These gentlemen were all more or less close friends of my father's, and so even the the local school inspector chose to ignore the fact that I, at the age of eight or nine, sat among boys who were eleven and twelve years old. In respect to my mental progress, which, of course, does not mean much in an elementary school, this might very well have been correct; but in respect to my soul, it meant a severe, painful deprivation, I was subjected to. Let me remark here that I make a very sharp distinction between the mind and the soul, between what is mental and what is spiritual (i.e. relating to the soul). What was given to my little mind in those grades, I did not belong to according to my age, was taken away from my soul. I did not sit among children of my own age. I was regarded as an intruder, and all of my little, warm needs of a child's soul were offered nothing to satisfy them. I short, I was a stranger to my grade from the start and became more of a stranger with every year. I had lost the class-mates who had fallen behind, without winning those over who were with me. Please, do not smile at this seemingly tiny, most insignificant fate of a boy. An educator, knowing his way around in the realm of a person's and a child's soul, will not hesitate for a moment in taking this seriously, very seriously.

Every grown-up and even more every child wants to stand on firm ground, which he must not lose, no matter what. But I had been deprived of this ground. I have never had what is commonly referred to as "boyhood". I was never granted a genuine, real schoolmate and boyhood-friend. The most simple consequence of this is that I am still today, in my old age, a stranger to my hometown, yes even more than any other stranger. They do not know me there; I was never understood there, and so it happened that a web of myths has been spun about me there, which I have to reject most decidedly.

What I had to learn, according to my father, was not at all limited to the lessons at school and the homework. He gathered all kinds of material, without having the ability required to make a selection or to determine any meaningful order. He brought together everything he found. I had to read or even copy it, since he



believed that I could remember it better this way. What did I have to endure, then! Old prayer-books, mathematical books, books on natural history, learned treatises, I did not understand a word of. I had to copy the entire 500 pages of a book on the geography of Germany from 1802, in order to remember the numbers better. There were, of course, already outdated for a very long time! I spent entire days and half nights, cramming this unnecessary stuff into my head. I was literally forced and overfed with this. I would probably have perished from it, if my body had not developed such a strength that, in spite of the extremely scarce food, it had been able to withstand even such a strain quite well. And there were also times and hours of relaxation. This was because father did not take a single walk and did not make a single errand to the countryside without taking me along. He used to pose only this one condition, that I would not miss a single moment in school on account of this. The walks through forests and groves were always most interesting, because of his rich knowledge of the flora. But we did not spend all of this time outdoors. There were certain days for certain inns. There met the teacher Schulze, the principal, the rich man Wetzell, the grocer Thiele, the merchant Vogel, the captain of the riflemen Lippold, and others for bowling or for playing skat.

Father was always one of them, and me too, because I had to. He thought, I belonged to him. He did not like to see me with other boys, since I would have been unsupervised then. He did not have the slightest concept for the fact that being with him, in the company of grown men, was certainly not the best place for me either. There, I could hear things and make observations, which had better been kept from such a youthful boy. By the way, father always practised moderation, even in the most happily drinking company. I have never seen him drunk. Whenever he went to an inn, his regular limit was one glass of simple beer at seven pfennig and one glass caraway-liquor or a double juniper-liquor at six pfennig; I was allowed to sip of this, too. On special occasions he shared a piece of cake for six pfennig with me. No one has ever warned him against bringing me into such a company of adults, not even the principal or the minister, who also joined in occasionally. At least those gentlemen should have known that, even when the conversation centred on permissible and perfectly clean topics, I was, as a silent, but very attentive listener, nonetheless introduced to things and affairs which should have been several decades in the future for me. I did not mature early, since this term is only used in respect to one's sexuality, and I did not get to hear anything about that, but rather something much worse: I was lifted out of my childhood and dragged onto that hard and filthy path on which my feet had to feel like walking on broken glass. How well

did I feel afterwards, when I came to grandmother and could escape with her to my dear land of make-believe! Naturally, I was much too young to realize that this land was founded on the truest and firmest part of reality. To me it had no feet; it floated in the air; only later, after I had worked my way up to fully understand it, it could offer me the support, I so desperately needed.

Then came the day, when a world revealed itself to me, which has grabbed hold of me ever since. The theatre came to town. Just an quite ordinary, miserable puppet-show, but a theatre nonetheless.

This was at the master weaver's house. First rows three groschen, second rows two groschen, third rows one groschen, children half price. I was permitted to go with grandmother. This cost fifteen pfennig for both of us. The piece was called: "The miller's rose or the battle of Jena." My eyes were burning; I was all ablaze inside. Puppets, puppets, puppets! But for me, they were alive.

They talked; they loved and hated; they suffered; they made great, daring decisions; they sacrificed themselves for king and for fatherland. There it was again, what the cantor had said and admired, then! My heart was cheering. After we had returned home, grandmother had to describe to me how the puppets were moved.

"On a wooden cross", she explained to me. "From this wooden cross the strings extend downwards, which are attached to the limbs of the puppets. They move, as soon as the cross above is moved."

"But they do speak!" I said.

"No, but the person holding the cross in his hands speaks. It is just as in real life."

“What do you mean?”

“You don’t understand this yet; but you will learn to understand it.”

I did not rest, until we were permitted to go once again. The play was “Doctor Faust or God, man, and devil”. It would be to no avail, if I attempted to put the impression this play had on me into words. This was not Goethe’s Faust, but the Faust of the ancient, traditional tale, not a drama summing up the entire philosophy of a great poet and a bit more, but rather a scream to heaven for redemption from the torment and fear of the worldly life, emerging directly from the deepest depth of the people’s soul. I heard, I felt this scream, and I joined in with it, though I was just a poor, ignorant boy, hardly nine years old then. Goethe’s Faust would not have been able to tell me, as a child, anything; to be honest, it still does not tell me even today what it probably wanted to tell and should have told mankind; but those puppets spoke loudly, almost too loudly, and what they said was great, infinitely great, because it was so simple, so infinitely simple: a devil, who may only return to God, if he brings that human soul along! And those strings, those strings, which are all reaching upwards, straight into heaven!

And everything, everything moving down there is attached to the cross, to pain, torment, the sufferings of this world. Whatever is not attached to this cross is obsolete, is motionless, is dead from heaven’s perspective! Of course, the latter thoughts did not occur to me then yet, not for a long time; but grandmother talked in this manner, though not thus clearly, and whatever part of it I did not see vividly before my very eyes, I nevertheless started to sense in some uncertain manner. Being a member of the students’ choir, I had to attend church two times on Sundays and holidays, and I enjoyed it. I cannot remember ever having missed any of these religious services. But I am honest enough to say that, in spite of all the spiritually uplifting experiences I had there, I never came home from church with such an indescribably deep impression, as that time from the puppet-show. Since that night, up to this day, I regard the theatre as a place through the gates of which nothing impure, ugly, or unholy must ever intrude.

When I asked the cantor, who had thought up and written down this play, he

answered that this had not been a single person, but rather the soul of the entire human race, and a great, famous German poet, Wolfgang Goethe by name, had turned it into a wonderful work of art, written not for puppets, but for living human beings. At this point, I quickly interjected: "Cantor, I also want to become such a great poet, writing not for puppets, but for living human beings! How do I have to go about it?"

Then, he gave me a long look with an almost pitiful smile and answered: "Go about it however you like, my boy, you'll end up sacrificing your work and your existence for nothing more than puppets most of the time." Of course, I was not able to understand this response until later; but those two nights had undoubtedly a very marked effect on my little soul. God, man, and devil have been and continue to be my favourite topics, and the idea that most people were nothing but puppets, not moving by themselves, but being moved, is always nearby in the background of everything I do. Is it God or the devil, is it another human being, a champion of the mind or a champion of arms, holding the cross in his hands, from which the strings extend downwards, to influence the human race? This is never obvious from the start, but can only be determined later by the consequences.

Shortly afterwards, I also got to know plays which did not come from the souls of the common people, but were written by poets for the theatre, and this is the point where I have to return to my drum. A company of actors came to stay in Ernstthal for a while. So this was not a puppet-show, but rather a genuine theatre. The prices were more than moderate: First rows 50

pfennig, second rows 25 pfennig, third rows 15 pfennig, and fourth rows 10 pfennig, standing room only. But in spite of this inexpensiveness, half of the seats remained empty every day. The "artists" incurred debts. The manager got frightfully scared. He was no longer able to pay the rent for the room which served as the theatre, when a saviour appeared before him, and this saviour was - - me. While taking a walk, he had met my father and poured out his troubles to him. They discussed the matter. As a result of this, father rushed home and said to me: "Karl, get your drum from the attic; we have to clean it!" "What for?" I asked. "You have to drum Madame Preziosa [a] and all of her gipsies three time across the stage." "Who is Madame Preziosa?"

“A young, beautiful gipsy girl, who is actually a count’s daughter. She has been kidnapped by the gipsies. Then, she returns and finds her parents. You’re the drummer boy, and you’ll get shiny buttons and a hat with a white feather. This will attract the audience. It will be announced. If the “house” will be sold out, the manager will give you five new-groschen; otherwise you’ll get nothing. The rehearsal is tomorrow at 11

a.m.”

[a] The play “Preziosa” was written by Pius Alexander Wolff (1782-1828).

It goes without saying that I was engulfed in joy. A gipsy drummer! A count’s daughter! Shiny buttons! A white feather!

Going three times around the entire stage! Five new-groschen!

The following night, I slept very little and arrived very punctually at the rehearsal. It worked out very well. All of the artists liked me. The manager’s wife petted my cheek. The manager commended me on my intelligent face, my courage, and my swift comprehension; but after all, he said, my part was rather easy. Perhaps I could do it for just forty pfennig; even thirty pfennig would be a generous salary. But father was with me and did not yield a single pfennig, because he had realized my artistic value and was not inclined to haggle. For these fifty pfennig, I had to appear only once, to lead the big parade of the gipsies. I stood by the scenery with all of the gipsies behind me. On the opposite side of the scenery stood the director, who also played the role of Pedro, the old overseer of the castle.

When he lifted his right hand, this was the sign for me to start the parade immediately and to disappear back to the same spot in the scenery, after having marched three times across the stage.

This was so childishly easy; it was impossible to go wrong. I was given the shiny buttons right after the rehearsal. Mother had to sew them to my clothes. There were more than thirty of them; she had a hard time fitting them all on my waistcoat. In the course of the afternoon, the hat with the white feather was

brought to me. It was hung out of the window for publicity and worked its effect. I had to arrive a quarter of an hour before the beginning of the show. I was received by the manager's wife with a bright smile, because the room was already thus full that some "box-seats" were quickly improvised in front, at a price of ten new-groschen per seat. They were also swiftly sold. Father, mother, and grandmother had been given free seats. After all, I was a most valuable little person on that day. This realization was so generally accepted that the manager's wife deemed it necessary, to put my five new-groschen into the right pocket of my trousers, before the curtain had even risen for the first time.

This increased my confidence and my artistic enthusiasm enormously.

And now they had come, those grand, uplifting moments of my first performance on stage. The first act was set in Madrid. Here, I had nothing to do. I sat in the dressing-room and listened to what was spoken on stage. Then, they came for me. I strapped on the drum, put on the feathered hat, and went for my place in the scenery. Don Fernando, Donna Klara, and also someone else stood on stage. Overseer Pedro, who had to give me my sign, was leaning against the opposite part of the scenery. He saw me coming on with such a forceful stride that he thought I wanted to go directly and right away out onto the stage. Therefore, he quickly rose his right hand to tell me to stop. But I took this, most naturally, for the agreed sign, though the gipsies were not standing behind me yet, I started to roll my drum, and marched out, all around the stage. Don Fernando and Donna Klara were startled and petrified. "Brat!" the overseer shouted at me, when I marched past him. Standing behind the scenery, he grabbed for me, in order to seize me and to pull me to him, but I had already marched on. From all kinds of places behind the scenery, they made signs at me, that I should stop and leave the stage; but I insisted on what we had agreed upon, which was to go three times all around the stage. "Brat!" the overseer bellowed, when I passed him by for the second time, and doing this so loudly that, in spite of the roll of the drum, it echoed throughout the entire auditorium. The answer came in the form of loud laughter from there; but I started my third round. "Bravo, bravo!" the cheers of the audience resounded. Now, finally, the startled manager, who was playing the part of Don Fernando, started to move again.

He leapt towards me, grasped both of my arms, so that I had to stop and could not roll my drum any more, and roared at me: "Boy, have you gone entirely

mad? Will you stop it!”

“No, don’t stop, go on, on and on!” they called from the auditorium laughingly.

“Yes, on and on!” I also answered, freeing myself from his grasp.

“The gipsies have to come! Bring out the gang, bring out the gang!”

“Yes, bring out the gang, bring out the gang!” screamed, hollered, and cheered the audience.

But I marched on and started to roll my drum once again. And then they came, the gang, though just reluctantly, Vianda the old gipsy-mother ahead of them, and then all of the others following her. Now, the real parade started, three rounds across the stage and then back to my place in the scenery. But the audience wanted more. They shouted: “Bring out the gang, bring them out!” and we had to start the parade once again, and over and over again. And in the end of the act, I had to appear two more times. What fun was that! After that, there was really nothing else for me to do and I could have left, but the manager would not let me go. He wrote a short speech for me, which I had to learn by heart on the spot and was supposed to recite in the end of the show. In case I would do my job well, he promised me another fifty pfennig. This invigorated my memory immensely. After the play had ended and the applause began to fade away, I marched out once again rolling my drum, to ask, while standing close to the edge of the stage, the “noble ladies and gentlemen” not to depart immediately, because the manager’s wife would appear and go from seat to seat to sell season-tickets as cheaply as they could hardly be made available tomorrow, the day after, or anytime thereafter. Reminiscent of words the audience had shouted in applause today, the manager had put the end of this address into the following form: “Thus, rrrreach with your hand into the pouch! And brrring out the money, brrring it out!” By no means, the audience was offended by this, but rather reacted with kind laughter, and my speech produced its desired effect. All

faces were smiling brightly, the management's as well as those of the rest of the artists including myself, because I did not only receive my other five new-groschen, but on top of it also a free ticket valid for the entire, current stay of the company in our town. I used it repeatedly, this is for plays my father could allow me to see. But with this not at all naughty company the audience hardly faced any danger of moral corruption, because when one day the manager joined the bowlers and was asked at this opportunity what fear caused him to remove all those tender love-scenes from all of his plays, he answered: "It's partially my moral obligation and partially just common sense. Our first and only leading actress is too old and furthermore too ugly for those parts."

In the plays I saw, I sought to find the cross and the strings, suspending the puppets. I was too young to find them. This was left to a later time. I also could not succeed in spotting the influences of God, devil, and man. Even still today, this happens to me very frequently, though these three factors are not just the most relevant, but also the only ones, the interactions of which have to be the building-blocks of a drama. I say this now, as a grown-up, an old man. Then, as a child, I understood none of this and allowed empty, hollow superficialness to impress me tremendously, like any other more or less grown-up child. Those people, who wrote such plays that were performed on stage, seemed to me like gods. If I was such a gifted person, I would not tell of kidnapped gipsy-girls, but of my glorious Sitara-fable, of Ardistan and Jinnistan, of the spirits' furnace of Kulub, of the deliverance from the torments of earth, and all those other, similar things! It is plain to see, once again I had reached one of these points in my life, where I was ripped out off the firm ground which other children have, and which I also needed so desperately, to be lifted up into a world I did not belong to, because only the chosen ones, men of ripe age, may enter here.

And there was more than this.

My parents were Lutheran Protestants. Accordingly, I had been baptised in the Lutheran manner, received Lutheran religious education, and had a Lutheran confirmation at the age of fourteen.

But this did not lead to an hostile attitude against members of other faiths at all.



We neither regarded ourselves as better or more called upon to do God's work than them. Our old minister was a kind, friendly gentleman, who would never have thought of using his office to sow religious hatred. Our teachers thought the same. And those who matter most in these things, father, mother, and grandmother, were all three of a deeply religious background, but of this inborn, not acquired religiosity, which does not seek any kind of confrontation and demands from everyone most of all to be a good person. Once he is this, he can just the more easily prove himself to be a good Christian as well. Once, I heard the minister talking to the principal about religious differences.

The first one said: "A fanatic is never a good diplomat." I remembered that. I have already said that I attended church twice on every Sunday and holiday, but without being bigoted or even regarding this as a special merit on my part. I prayed daily, in every situation of my life, and still pray today. As long as I live, there has never been a single moment when I might have doubted in God, his all-mightiness, his wisdom, his love, or in him being just. Today, I am still as steadfast as ever in this, my unwavering faith.

I always had a tendency towards symbolism, and not just the religious kind. Every person and every action which stands for something good, noble, or deep is sacred to me. Therefore, some religious customs, I had to participate in as a boy, made a rather special impression upon me. One of these customs was this: The confirmees, who had received their blessing on Palm Sunday, participated on the following Maundy Thursday, for the first time in their lives, in the Holy Communion. Only during this one celebration of the last supper, and no other one for the entire year, the first four members of the students' choir stood by the altar, two on each side, to offer their assistance. They were dressed just like ministers, a cassock, bands, and a white scarf.

They stood between the minister and the communicants, approaching the altar two at a time, and held out black cloths with golden borders, to keep any part of the holy offering from being spilled.

Since I joined the students' choir at quite a young age, I had to perform this office several times, before I received the blessing for myself. These godly moments of faith before the altar still continue to have their effect on me today, after so many years have past.

Another one of these customs was that each year on the first day of Christmas the leading boy of the students' choir had to ascent the pulpit during the main religious service, to sing the prophesy of Isaiah, chapter 9, verses 2 to 7. He did this all alone, mildly and quietly accompanied by the organ. This took some courage, and rather often, the organist had to come to the little singer's aid, to keep him from getting stuck. I also have sung this prophesy, and just as the congregation heard me sing it, so it is still impressed upon me and resounds from me to even my most distant reader, though in other words, between the lines of my books. Whoever has stood on the pulpit as little school-boy and has sung with a cheerfully uplifted voice before the attentive congregation that a bright light would appear and that from now on there would be no end to peace, he will, unless he utterly resists against it, be accompanied by this very star of Bethlehem for his entire life, which even keeps on shining when all other stars fade away.

Someone who is not accustomed to see the deeper meanings might say now that here again I have come to such a point, where the support of my fellow men had been pulled out from under my feet, so that spiritually I was finally hovering in thin air. But the very opposite is the case. Nothing has been taken from me, but much, very much has been given, though no support, no save hiding-place down in the soil, but rather a rope, sufficiently strong and firm, to be saved by rising upwards, if ever the abyss should open up beneath me, the abyss I was destined for, as fatalists would say, from the very start. By starting to talk about this abyss, I enter those areas of my so-called boyhood, where the morasses were to be found and still are found, from which all the mists and all the poisons arise, which have turned my life into an uninterrupted, endless torment.

The name of this abyss is, to call it by its proper name right from the start - - reading. By no means did I plummet into it, suddenly, surprisingly, and unexpectedly, but rather I descended into it, step by step, slowly and purposefully, always guided by my father's hand. Granted, he suspected as little as I, where this path would lead us. My first reading material consisted of the fairy-tales, the herbal book, and the illustrated Bible with our ancestors'

annotations. This was followed by the various school-books of the present and the past, which were to be found in our little town. Then came all sorts of other books, father borrowed from all around. Besides this, there was the Bible. Not just a selection of biblical stories, but the entire, complete Bible, which I have read repeatedly as a boy, from the first word to the last, with all that is in it. Father thought this was a good thing, and no one of my teachers spoke out against him, not even the minister. He did not permit me to even give the appearance of having nothing to keep me busy. And he was against any kind of participation in the “misdoings” of other boys. He brought me up as one would manufacture a prototypical specimen, to promote one’s work before others. I had to be at home all the time, to write, to read, and to “learn”! By and by, I was exempt from sewing gloves. Even when he left the house, this did not give me any relief, because he took me with him. When I saw children of my own age jumping, running, playing, and laughing in the market square, I rarely dared to utter the wish to join them, because when father was not in a good mood, this was very dangerous. Then, when I sat sadly or even with a hidden tear with my book, mother occasionally pushed my out of the door and mercifully said: “So just go out for a bit; but be back within ten minutes, or he’ll beat you up. I’ll say, I’d sent you somewhere!” Oh, this mother, this uniquely good, poor, quiet mother! If you want to know what else I think of her, even today, turn to the poem on page 105 of my book “Himmelsgedanken”

<Thoughts of Heaven>. And the poem on page 109 refers to my grandmother, out of whose soul the character of Marah Durimeh has grown, this oriental princess, which symbolises to my and my readers the “soul of mankind”.

After I had read so about everything that was to be found in the private households of Hohenstein-Ernstthal in the form of books of every genre, and had also copied or made notes of much, very much of it, father started looking around for new sources. There had been three of them, these were the libraries of the cantor, the principal, and the minister. The cantor proved to be the most reasonable one of the three in this respect as well. He said, he had no books for entertainment, but only books for learning, and I was still far too young for those, then. But nevertheless, he parted with one of them, for the thought, it might be very useful for me as member of the choir to learn how to translate the Latin texts of our hymns into the the German language. This book was on Latin grammar; the title page was missing, but on the next page it read:

“A boy must get his lessons down,  
for him to be a dominus, [a]  
but if he learns just with a frown, thus he will be an asinus!” [b]

[a] dominus (Latin) = master, lord

[b] asinus (Latin) = donkey, ass

Father was truly delighted about this four-lined rhyme and stated that I should take good care that would not become an asinus, but rather a dominus. So, now I was to get busy and quickly learn some Latin!

Soon afterwards, some families of Ernstthal arrived at the decision to emigrate to America, in the coming year. Therefore, their children were to learn as much English as possible during this period of time. It goes without saying that I had to join them! And then it happened that in some manner, I do not recall how, a book came into our possession, containing French songs of the Freemasons, both lyrics and melodies. It had been printed in the year 1782 in Berlin and was dedicated to “His Royal Highness, Friedrich Wilhelm, prince of Prussia”. Just for that, it had to be good and of a very high value! The title read: “Chansons maconniques”, and the melody I liked the most had seven four-lined stanzas to be sung to it, the first of which I would like to quote here:

“Nous venerons de l’Arabie

La sage et noble antiquite,

Et la celebre Confrairie

Transmise a la posterite.” [a]

[a] We venerate Arabia, the wise and noble ancient world, and the famous Brotherhood (confrerie), passed on to posterity.

The term “songs of the Freemasons” had a particular attraction.

What a delight to be able to delve into the secrets of freemasonry! Luckily, the principal also gave private lessons in French. He permitted me to enter into this “circle”, and so it happened that I had to deal with Latin, English, and French now all at the same time.

The principal was less reluctant in respect to borrowing me some of his books than the cantor. His favourite subject was geography. He possessed hundreds of geographic and ethnographic volumes, which he all made available to my father for me. I grasped this treasure with true enthusiasm, and the kind gentleman was glad about it, without having even the most obvious objections against it. Though he contemplated seeking employment as a minister, he was nonetheless in his heart more a philosopher than a theologian, and tended towards a freer way of thinking. But this was less obvious from his words than from the books he owned.

At the same time, the minister also allowed me access to his library. He was no philosopher at all, but only and exclusively a theologian, nothing else. I am not referring to our old, kind minister, I mentioned before, but his successor, who first gave me all of his little tracts to read and then added to them all kinds of scriptures by Redenbacher and other good people, to awaken the faith, uplift the spirit, and educate the youth. So it happened that I had received from the principal, for instance, an enthusiastic description of Islamic charity and from the minister a missionary report, which bitterly complained about the obvious decline in Christian compassion, now lying before me side by side.

In the first one’s library, I got familiar with Humboldt, Bonpland, and all those other “great” men, who trusted more in science than in religion, and in the

second one's library there were all those other "great" men, who esteemed religious revelation infinitely higher than all scientific results. And during all this, I was by no means an adult, but a stupid, a very stupid boy; but even much more foolish than I, were those who allowed me to fall and sink into those conflicts, without knowing what they did. Everything that was written in those so diverse books, could have been good, yes even excellent; but for me it had to turn into poison.

But even worse things followed. The private lessons in those foreign languages, which I received now, had to be payed, and I was the one who had to earn this money in one way or another. We looked around. A bar in Hohenstein was looking for a nimble, persevering boy to set up the pins in the bowling alley. I applied, though I had no experience, and got the job. Yes, I did earn money there, very much money, but how! By what pains! And what else did I sacrifice for this! The bowling alley was used often, being located in a closed room with a stove, so that it could be used in summer as well as in winter and in all kinds of weather. They bowled every day. From now on, I could not even find a quarter of an hour of spare time, and in particular not on a Sunday afternoon. Then, it started right after church and lasted until late at night. But the most busy day was Monday, because this was the day of the weekly market, when the inhabitants of the countryside came into town, to bring their products, to do their shopping, and - last but not least - to have a game of bowling. But this one game turned into five, ten, twenty, and it could happen on these Mondays that I had to toil from twelve o'clock at noon until after midnight, without even being able to take just five minutes of rest. To strengthen myself, I got in the afternoon and in the evening a buttered slice of bread and and a glass of stale beer, poured together from the left-overs. It also happened that a sympathetic bowler, seeing that I could hardly go on, brought me a glass of hard liquor, to invigorate me. I never complained about this excessive strain at home, because I saw how indispensably what I earned was needed.

The amount I got together there on a weekly basis really made a big difference. I received a fixed income for every hour and furthermore a certain amount for every honour [a] that was bowled. If the game was not played in the normal way, but free betting, or even gambling was practised, this amount was doubled or tripled. There have been Mondays, when I brought home more than twenty groschen, but was so tired, I more stumbled than climbed up the stairs to our

lodgings.

[a] Honneur: French for “honour”, but here it means striking the middle row of the pins.

But what did my soul gain from this? Nothing at all, it just lost something. The beer they drank was just of a simple and cheap kind, but hard liquor was consumed in particularly large quantities. I will show elsewhere that these were not the kind of people, who would be familiar with what one might describe as consideration or even sensitivity. Everything which might have come into someone’s mind was blurted out without restraint. You can imagine the kinds of things I got to hear there! The long enclosure of the bowling alley worked like an ear-trumpet. Every word which was spoken in the front among the players reached me clearly. Everything which grandmother and mother, the cantor and the principal as well, has built up within me, was outraged at what I got to hear here. There was much filth and also much poison in it. There was none of that powerful, utterly healthy gaiety which, for instance, can be found at an upper Bavarian bowling alley, but those were people, who came directly from the mind-numbing atmosphere of their looms into the bar, to have for a few hours the illusion of pleasure, but which was anything less than a pleasure, at least for me it was torture, physically as well as spiritually.

And yet, this bar had even much worse poison to offer than beer and brandy and similar, evil things, this was a rental library, and what a library! Never again have I seen such a filthy, internally and externally perfectly rough, extremely dangerous collection of books like this one! It was extremely profitable, because it was the only one for both small towns. No new books were bought. The only change that came upon it was that the covers grew even filthier and the pages grew even greasier and more worn out. But the contents was eagerly devoured by the readers, again and again, and I have to admit to the truth and confess to my own disgrace that I also, once I had tasted it, totally succumbed to the devil, who was hiding in those volumes.

Let some of the titles show what kind of a devil this was: Rinaldo Rinaldini, the

Robbers' Captain, by Vulpius, Goethe's brother-in-law [a]. Sallo Sallini, the Noble Captain of the Robbers. Himlo Himlini, the Charitable Captain of the Robbers. [b] The Robbers' Den on Monte Viso. [c] Bellini, the Admirable Bandit. The Robber's Beautiful Bride or the Victim of the Unfair Judge. The Tower of Starvation or the Cruelty of the Laws. Bruno von Loeweneck, der Annihilator of the Clerics. [d]

Hans von Hunsrueck or the Robber-Knight as a Protector of the Poor. Emilia, the Immured Nun. Botho von Tollenfels, the Saviour of the Innocent. The Bride at the Execution. The King as a Murderer. The Sins of the Archbishop *etc. etc.*

[a] This is Christian August Vulpius (1762-1827), the brother of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's wife Christiane.

[b] "Sallo Sallini" and "Himlo Himlini" were both written by Georg Carl Ludwig Schoepffer (1811-1876), published in 1828

and 1833.

[c] "Die Raeuberhoehle auf dem Monte Viso", by Theodor Graeber, published in 1834.

[d] Perhaps this refers to "Bruno von Loeweneck und Clara von Hunsrueck", published anonymously in 1825.

When I came to set up the pins and no players had come yet, the owner of the bar gave me one of these books, to read it for the time being. Later, he told me I could read them all, without having to pay for it. And I read them; I devoured them; I read them three or four times! I took them home. I sat for entire nights over them with burning eyes. Father did not object.

Nobody warned me, not even those who would have been so very much obliged to warn me. They knew very well, what I read; I did not conceal it. And what an effect this had! I did not even suspect what this caused inside of me; how much collapsed within me; that the few means of support I, the boy who was spiritually hovering in thin air, still had now also fell with the exception of one,



this was my faith in God and my confidence in Him.

Psychology is presently in a process of transformation. More and more, the distinction between the mind and the soul is being made.

There is an attempt to separate the two, to define them sharply, to prove their differences. It is being said that a human being was not a single entity, but a drama. For the purpose of going along with this view, I must not confuse what affected my small, still growing mind and my boyish soul. All of this extensive reading, I was forced to do up to now, did not profit my soul at all, not in the least; just the ever so tiny mind did bear the effects of this, but what an effects were these! It had been blown up and rolled out into a little, monstrously fat, big-headed freak. The very well, perhaps even extraordinarily, talented boy had transformed into an unshapely, mentally deformed creature, who possessed nothing real except for his helplessness. And spiritually, my soul was without home, without youth, was just held up by this strong, indestructible rope, I mentioned before, and was only tied to the earth below by this more poetic than material high regard for king and fatherland, law and justice, which originated from those days when the eleven companies of heroes had been formed in Ernstthal, to save the severely besieged monarch of Saxony and his government from certain ruin. But now, this support was taken from me as well by reading from this shameful rental library. All of those robber-captains, bandits, and robber-knights, of which I read there, were noble people.

Whatever they were now, they had become because of bad people, especially because of unfair judges and the cruel authorities.

They possessed the true religious virtues, ardent patriotism, limitless charity, and styled themselves as the knights and saviours of all those who were poor, all those who were downtrodden and oppressed. They imbued the reader with respect and admiration; but all adversaries of these glorious men were to be despised, and in particular the authorities whose designs were foiled again and again. And most of all, there was this fullness of life, of action, of movement, which dominated these books! On every page, something happened, something most interesting, some great, hard, daring deed, which was to be admired. What, on the other hand, had happened in all those books I had read up to now?

What happened in the minister's tracts? In his boring, meaningless scriptures for the youth? And what happened in those otherwise rather good and useful books of the principal? They described great, large, and distant countries, but nothing happened in all of this. They told of foreign people and nations, but they did not move, they did nothing. This was all just geography, just geography, nothing else; any kind of a plot was missing. And just ethnography, just ethnography; but the puppets stood still. There was no God, no man, and also no devil, to take the cross with the strings into his hand and to give these dead characters life! And yet, there is one person, who absolutely demands this life, this is the reader. And this is the one, upon whom everything depends, because he alone is the one the books are written for. The reader's soul will turn away from any kind of lack of movement, because this means this soul's death. What a wealth of life was there, on the other hand, in this rental library! And how was it tuned to the peculiarities and requirements of the one who would take such a book into his hands!

As soon as he would feel a wish while reading, it is already fulfilled. And what an admirable, unchanging justice rules the scene. Every good, honourable person, may he be the captain of the robbers ten times over, is invariably rewarded. And every evil person, every sinner, may he be ten times a king, general, bishop, or public prosecutor, is invariably punished. This is true justice; this is divine justice! No matter how much Goethe may write in poetry and prose about the glory and irrevocability of divine and human law, he is nonetheless wrong! Only his brother-in-law Vulpius is right, for he has created that Rinaldo Rinaldini!

What was worst about this reading was that it took place in the later phase of my boyhood, when everything which took hold of my soul was to be kept there forever. In addition, there was my inborn naivety, which I still have even today to a large degree.

I believed in what I read there, and father, mother, and sisters believed it with me. Only grandmother shook her head, and even the more the longer it lasted; but she was outvoted by the rest of us. In our poverty, we found an great delight in reading about "noble" people, who kept on giving away riches. That they had stolen and robbed those riches from others before, was just their business; this did not irritate us! When we read how many needy people had been supported and saved by such robbers' captain, we were happy about this and imagined how

nice it would be, if such a Himlo Himlini would suddenly step through our door, put ten thousand shiny talers on the table, and said: "This is for your boy; let him study and become a dramatic poet!" This was because the latter had become my ideal, since I had seen the "Faust".

I must confess that I not just read those ruinous books, but read them to others as well, first to my parents and sisters and then also to other families, who were so very eager to hear them. It is immeasurable how much damage a single one of these trashy books can cause. Everything positive is lost, and finally, only the miserable negation remains. The concepts and views of the law change; the lie turns into the truth, the truth, into the lie.

The conscience dies. The differentiation between good and evil becomes more and more unreliable! This finally leads to the admiration for the forbidden deed, which gives the illusion of relief from want. But with this, a person has by no means reached the very bottom of the abyss yet; it is deeper, even deeper still, leading down to the most extreme criminal existence.

This was the time when the decision had to be made, what I should do after the confirmation. I would have liked so endlessly much to go to a secondary school and then to a university. But for this the means just were not enough. I had to downgrade my wishes and finally arrived at the idea of becoming primary school teacher. But we were even too poor for this. We looked around for help. The merchant Friedrich Wilhelm Layritz, no relation with the town's judge by the same name, was a very rich and very religious man. Though nobody had ever proven him responsible for any charitable act, he never missed church, enjoyed talking about humaneness and neighbourly love, and was connected with our family by means of a godfathership. We had got all of the information and had made a rough estimate. If we worked properly, saved properly, starved properly, and I would not waste a single pfennig at the seminary in vain, we would only need another five to ten taler per year. We had figured this out. Of course it was all wrong; but we thought it to be right. My parents had never borrowed a single pfennig; now they were determined to take a loan for my sake. Mother went to Mr. Layritz. He sat down in an arm-chair, folded his hands, and let her state her case. She told him everything and asked him to borrow us five taler, not right

now, but when we would need them, this was when I would have passed the entry exam. Until then, there was still so very much time. To this, he answered without giving it much thought: “My dear friend, it’s true, I’m rich and you’re poor, very poor. But you have the same God as I, and as He has helped me to get where I am, so He will help you as well. I also have children, like you, and have to provide for them. Thus, I can’t lend you these five taler. But be confident and go home, pray frequently, then you can be sure that in time someone will be found who can spare the money and will give it to you!”

This happened late in the evening. I sat at home, reading one of these books about robbers, when mother returned and told what Mr.

Layritz had said. It was more her outrage at such a kind of religiousness than the rejection, which made her cry. Father sat still for a long time; then, he got up and left. But while stepping out of the door, he said: “We’ll not try anything like this again! Karl will go to seminary, even if I have to work until my hands bleed!” After he had left, the rest of us continued sitting sadly together for a long time. Then we went to bed. But I did not sleep, but stayed awake. I searched for a way out. I struggled to reach a decision. The book I had been reading bore the title: “The Robbers’ Den at Sierra Morena or The Angel of All Oppressed”. After Father had returned home and had fallen asleep, I got out of bed, sneaked out of the chamber, and got dressed. Then, I wrote on a piece of paper: “You shall not work until your hands bleed; I am going to Spain; I am getting help!” I placed this paper on the table, put a small piece of dry bread into my pocket as well as a few groschen from the money I had earned at the bowling alley, descended down the stairs, opened the door, took another deep breath and sighed, but just quietly, very quietly, lest anybody should hear it, and walked with hushed steps down the market square, leaving town by the Niedergasse <lower alley>, turning to the Lungwitzer road, which lead via Lichtenstein to Zwickau [a], towards Spain, to Spain, the land of the noble robbers, the helpers from distress. - - -

[a] Zwickau is the next larger town to the west of Ernstthal, about 17 km (10 miles) away. Lichtenstein is a small town about half way between the two. (Do not confuse this with Liechtenstein.)

IV. My Time at the Seminary and as a Teacher No plant draws what is to be contained in its cells and in its fruits from itself, but rather from the soil it sprang from and from the atmosphere it breaths. A human being is also a plant in this respect. Though not being physically attached to one spot, we are nevertheless mentally and spiritually rooted, deeply rooted, very deeply, more deeply than many a giant tree in the the Californian soil. Therefore, nobody can be held fully responsible for whatever he does while he is still in the process of development. To hold him fully accountable for all of his mistakes, would be just as wrong as pretending that he had obtained all of his good qualities entirely on his own. Only he who precisely knows and correctly assesses the native soil and the adolescent atmosphere of a “developed” one, is capable to prove with some amount of certainty, which parts of his lot in life are the product of the given circumstances and which of the purely individual intentions of the person concerned. It has been one of the worst cruelties of the past, to burden every poor devil who was led to a violation of the law by his circumstances, in addition to his own, possibly minor, guilt, with the entire, heavy load of the circumstances as well. Unfortunately, there are still more than enough people today who, even now, still commit this cruelty, without even suspecting that they are the ones who would have to share in bearing the responsibility, if there were laws to that effect. And usually, it are not at all the remote people, but even more so the dear “neighbours”, who cast stone upon stone on one of them, though the influences he succumbed to where most of all coming from them as well. Thus, they also bear part of the guilt themselves, which they cast upon him.

When I am now taking on the task of putting the circumstances which shaped me through an unbiased examination, this is not done with the intension to cast any part of my own guilt from me and upon others, but only to demonstrate for once by an expressive example how careful someone has to be who would want to endeavour on a precise investigation of the origin and development of a single human being.

At this time, Hohenstein and Ernstthal were two small towns, which were situated so close together that in some parts their narrow alleys intertwined like

the fingers of two folded hands. In Hohenstein, the natural philosopher Gotthilf Heinrich von Schubert was born, whose earlier work was under the influence of Schelling, but who then turned to pietistic-ascetic mysticism. His native town has built a monument in his honour. From Ernstthal was the accomplished philosopher and author Poelitz, whose library consisted of more than 30.000 volumes, which he had left to the city of Leipzig. Here, I am less concerned with Hohenstein than with Ernstthal, where I, as Hobble-Frank [a] would put it, “for the first time saw the light of day”. The first and oldest impressions of my childhood are those of a lamentable poverty, and not just in a material, but also in another respect. Never again in my life, I have seen so much mental frugality in one spot as then. The mayor had no university training. There was a night-watchman, but the inhabitants had to take turns in participating in the nightly watch. The main occupation was weaving. The wages could only be described as meagre, often even more than meagre. At certain times, there was little or no work at all for weeks, sometimes even for months. Then, one could see women going to the forest and bringing back baskets full of brushwood, to have something for the fire in winter. At night, on lonely paths, one could come across men, carrying large logs home, which had to be sawn and chopped into firewood the very night, so that nothing could be found, when the premises were searched. The poor weavers had to work hard, in order to fend off hunger.

Saturday was payday. Then, everyone brought his “piece to the market”. For every flaw, which could be found, a certain amount was subtracted from the wages. So many a man brought home less than he had expected. Then, it was time to relax. Saturday night was devoted to gaiety and - - - booze. One neighbour met with another. The “Bulle” was handed around. “Bulle” is short for bouteille [b]. In some families they sang to this, but what songs were these ever so often! In others the cards ruled the scene.

Then, they played “lumpen”, “schafkopf”, or even “tippen”. The latter is an illegal game of chance, on which some men spent the earnings of an entire week. To this, they drank from a single glass. This went from one hand to another, from one mouth to another. Even on the Sunday promenade, just as anytime someone left his house, a supply of brandy was brought along. So they sat at the picnic and drank. Hard liquor was a part of everything; one would not want to do without it. It was regarded as the only relief from worry, and its worst effects were accepted, as if this was the most natural thing in the world.

[a] Hobble-Frank: a character from several of Karl May's novels.

[b] bouteille: bottle (French). Let me offer an alternative etymology for the word "Bulle". It is common for people from Saxony to pronounce a "P" like a "B". Thus, I would guess that "Bulle" is actually just the Saxonian pronunciation of that colloquialism for a bottle which is more correctly pronounced and spelled as "Pulle", which in turn is a degeneration of the Latin "ampulla" according to my etymological dictionary.

Of course, there were also so-called better families, who were not governed by alcohol, but there were only very few of them. There were no patrician dynasties in either town. In Hohenstein lived some families who had a higher reputation than others, but not in Ernstthal. The minister and the physicians were the only persons with an academic education, and then there also was a lawyer, whose liquidations simply would not want to turn into a comfortable income. Thus, the entire way of life was on an extremely low level, and the general tone of conversation was tuned in a way which would seem almost impossible now. In personal relations, nick-names were often more in use than the genuine, real names. Let the name Wolf serve as the only example, I am going to list here. There was a Weisskopfwolf <white head wolf>, a Rotkopfwolf <red head wolf>, a Daniellobwolf, a Schlagwolf, and also lots of wolves by other names. The houses were little, the alleys were narrow. Everyone could look into his neighbour's windows and observe everything what happened. Thus it became almost an impossibility to keep secrets from one another.

And since there is no one without fault, everyone has his neighbour in the bag. Everything was known, but nothing was said.

Just occasionally, when it was deemed necessary, a small hint was dropped, and this was enough. What this led to was an everlasting, but silent hypocrisy, a low form of irony, a seemingly benevolent sarcasm, which had no real basis. This was unhealthy and spread more and more, without anybody noticing it.

This corroded; this was like poison. Thus, the card games of the Saturday nights had turned into a shady undertaking, serving the purpose of carrying out an illegal, yes even cheating, fraudulent game of cards. The persons concerned met, to practise the fabrication and the usage of marked cards. They established

themselves in an inn, located out of town. They sent out scouts to bring in their victims. There they sat for entire nights, playing for high stakes. Ever so often, someone came with full pockets and left with empty ones. These goings on were well known in town. The news of every new trick they pulled off spread quickly. The sums they bagged were discussed with pleasure, instead of holding their fraud against them. The card sharpers were treated like honest people. They were supported. Yes, their wits were admired and praised, and not the slightest thing that was known about them was betrayed. It would not have occurred to a single person that, by this, the entire town became an accessory to the fraud, committed against the victims they brought in, and that everyone who knew about these rackets ought to have considered himself as guilty as a receiver of stolen goods. If, at this time, anybody had said that this was a deplorable, general state of immorality, he would probably have been laughed at or perhaps even worse. The general sense for what is right had been misguided. The card sharpers were admired, just as the Rinaldo Rinaldinis and Himlo Himlinis from the old rental library were admired, the volumes of which were eagerly read, because it was the only library for both towns. I have never heard that the mayor, the minister, or any other official, whose duty this might have been, had ever summoned one of these card sharpers to admonish him and to make him cease setting such an evil example for the entire community. It was tolerated. Everyone shut his eyes to it and kept quiet. But the younger generation, seeing and hearing all of this, had to get the impression that these acts of fraud were an admirable and very worth while occupation, and such an impression will never be blurred again. At one time, I have been told by a law-professional, that I had grown up in a filthy swamp. Would you think, that this gentleman was right or not?

Two peculiar outgrowths of this swamp were the two names “Batzen Dorf” <Batzen Village> and the “Luegensmiede” <forge of lies>. The first name is derived from the well known, old, South German and Swiss divisional coin, batzen by name. Batzen Dorf was the community of a non-existent village, which every inhabitant of Ernstthal could join. It was a joke, but a joke which was frequently overdone. Batzen Dorf had its own council, its own minister, its own administration, but all of this was regarded in a manner which was meant to be humorous. The very smallest house of Ernstthal, the one where the vegetable vendor Dore Wendelbrueck lived, had been declared to be the town hall of Batzen Dorf. One morning, there was a tower on top of it, which had been pieced together from wooden boards and cigar-boxes, und had been placed on old



Dore's roof, without even asking her. But she was very proud of it. The innkeeper's wife from the Meisterhaus-inn was the village's night-watchwoman. She had to announce the hours and blow her horn. Every public authority and people from every lower walk of life were represented, down to the potato-watchman and the guardian of the pods, all of this was also a joke. Every Saturday, they held a meeting. Here, the entire community came together and the craziest plans were hatched, to be actually carried out, later on: baptisms of infants at the age of fifty, the wedding of two widows, an exercise of the fire-brigade without water, the election of a new community-goose, a public test of a new remedy against tape-worms, and similar crazy, often even very crazy things. The town's judge Layritz had grown old and did nothing about this. The minister was even older and never thought bad of anything. He always said: "Just don't overdo it, just don't overdo it!" With this, he thought his duty was done. The cantor shook his head. He was too modest, to step forward with a public reproof. But when being alone with my father, he had the courage to warn him: "Don't go along with this, neighbour, don't you go along with this! This isn't good for you, and it's also not good for Karl. What's done there, is nothing but parody, irony, mocking, and jeering of things, the sanctity of which no one should ever question! And especially children should never get to see or to hear something like this!"

He was very, very right. This "Batzendorf", where batzen-money was the only accepted currency, has existed for quite a number of years and had many a quiet, secret, but just the more evil effect.

There, "the ties of decent restraint" were loosened. There was something new every week. We children observed the silliness of the adults with huge interest and joined in the mockery and the parody, but of course, without becoming aware of it. This went on like that, until the town's administration and the church came under a new, strict rule, and Batzendorf was ruined by its own doings. But it had benefited no one. This was a swamp of moral degradation to which not only the older ones had turned, but we younger ones were also led right into it and very much of our nature as children got stuck in it and had to be left behind. The untalented ones were less hurt by this; but on the talented ones it continues to have its effect and grows inside of him up to a size which later, once it becomes apparent, cannot be contained any longer.

The “Luegenschmiede” was of a slightly newer date. In talking about it, I intentionally do not give any names. What I have to say, I only want to direct against the matter itself, not against any persons. In Ernstthal, there were several younger people who had much talent for satire. Basically, they were very respectable, kind people, and therefore could have used their talents for their benefit, if they had lived under different, more generous circumstances, but as things were, they got stuck below, in the limited circumstances, and were therefore unable to achieve anything but the petty and the ordinary, often even just the very trivial. This has been a real waste of talent!

One of them, perhaps the most enterprising and most humorous one, got to own his own house and had the audacity to open a delicatessen in this town of Ernstthal, where there was so little appreciation and money for delicacies, but of course, this included a restaurant, because without it, he surely would not have been able to find any customers. At first, this restaurant bore no particular name; but it did not take long, until it got one, and a very fitting one, as well. It had been called the “Luegenschmiede” <forge of lies> and its proprietor was referred to as the “Luegenschmied” <smith of lies>. Why? The proprietor as well as his regulars all liked a good laugh. A stranger might have frequented this place several times, without noticing anything of it. But suddenly, it came over him, suddenly, entirely unexpectedly, and with an irresistible certainty. He was “done”, as they called it. They had discovered his weakest spot and his strongest hook, which was used to hang some cleverly devised lie on it, which he had to believe, whether he liked it or not. This lie had to put him into an embarrassing situation, no matter how he might try to avert it, and even if he had been ten or hundred times smarter than those who had decided to trip him.

This forge of lies became famous all around. Thousands of strangers came as guests, and everyone who got the idea of getting into an argument with the owner and his regulars, got his thrashing and embarrassedly went on his way.

Ordinary guests got the simple treatment. When someone demanded a beer, he got a cognac. Did he ask for a brandy, he received lemonade. If he wanted to eat a pickled herring, he was presented with unpeeled potatoes and apple-sauce. And nobody refused to take it and to pay for it, because they all knew that otherwise embarrassment would follow. Better guests were not in for such ordinary jokes. They were kept waiting. "He isn't quite ripe yet", the Luegenschmied used to say. And everyone got ripe, everyone, whoever or whatever he might be, whether he had studied or not, whether his rank was high or low. The pranks were often quite ingenious, but had always a tendency towards the ordinary.

A guest, who wanted to get a shave, had been told, the barber was not at home, but rather here, sitting right next to him. But actually, this man was no barber, but rather a baker. He lathered the man with aniline and shaved him, while all the others kept a straight face. The saved man payed and happily went away, blue all over his face. For weeks, he could not show his face in public; this was his punishment for insisting at the Luegenschmiede that he was smarter than all others and that no one could fool him. Another guest had been told that his brother has had an accident on the fairground the same day before noon. He had come to close too a huge barrel organ, and so his right leg got entangled in the gears; as a consequence, the leg had to be amputated below the knee. The man jumped up in fright and ran off, but very soon, he returned laughing with his entirely healthy brother. The gentlemen of the public authorities also very much enjoyed frequenting the Luegenschmiede, but only at times when they knew they could be alone and unobserved. They also put up with an odd prank, and often it was just due to their influence when the proprietor's pranks, which often went too far, bore no unpleasant consequences. This was because the whole matter was increasingly overdone, like everything which comes from the low-minded way of thinking. The pranks became more ordinary; they lost their attraction. It had all been done to death. And everyone entering the Luegenschmiede, thought he could tell lies and misrepresent the truth. The spirit was gone. What had been real humour, real fun, real kidding and joking, now became obscenity, ambiguity, untruthfulness, forgery, imprudent gossip, and lie. The Luegenschmiede has disappeared by now. The house has been demolished. But unfortunately, the consequences of this inappropriate tomfoolery have not disappeared with it. They still exist today. They continue having their effects. This also was a swamp, a swamp hidden under the brightest green and the most alluring flowers. Not just the town's soul had suffered from it, but its miasmas have also spread around over a larger area of the land, and I deeply, deeply regret that I am also

one of those who suffered from it extensively and severely, and still have to suffer up to the present day. What enabled my opponents to turn the Karl May I really and truly am into this most untruthful of all caricatures and to parade me through all of the newspapers as a bandit who robs market-women and a robber-captain was to a large extent the Luegenschmiede; its regulars never even considered what they were doing to me by exposing each other to ever new, made up stories of my supposed adventures and misdeeds.

I will return to this elsewhere, but here, I still have to say one very short thing: What I had to report of the card sharpeners, of "Batzendorf", and of the "Luegenschmiede", are just a few short insights into the conditions of my native town at that time. I could increase and deepen these insight extensively, to prove that it has really and truly been a very contaminated soil, where my soul had been forced to be rooted in, but I would like to refrain from this with great pleasure, because I have been delighted to see recently, how much has changed there. I had shunned my native town for quite some time and wanted to avoid it furthermore as well, when a legal action forced me to return there one again. I was pleasantly disappointed. I am not referring to external, but to internal matters. I have seen enough towns and places; nothing can surprise me and nothing can disappoint me in that respect. As I, primarily and above anything else, seek to get to know the soul of any stranger I happen to meet, so I also seek to know the soul of every place I enter anew. And though the soul of Hohenstein-Ernstthal was still the same, I saw this right away, it was nevertheless uplifted, it had cleansed itself, it had obtained a different, better, and more dignified appearance. I had the opportunity to observe it for a few days, and might very well say that I enjoyed these observations. I found intelligence, where there had not been any before. I met with a lively respect for the law, which was not as easily misguided as in the past. There was more responsibility for the community, more of a feeling of togetherness. Yes, the material conditions were looking up everywhere, up towards the ideal. The ground on which the people lived was uplifted and presented the ability to better itself furthermore and increasingly. I met old acquaintances, who had really made something of their lives. To me, this was a satisfaction, I had not expected. There were no longer those old, indolent faces with an expression of the disagreeable cunning of uneducated people, but the features showed insight and ability, healthy intelligence and considered judgement. Might this have been just a consequence of new people moving into town? Surely not exclusively, though it cannot be denied that new blood from outside has a invigorating, strengthening, and improving effect on the life of a community. I honestly confess that after this

visit and after these observations, I have again a certain fondness for my native town and wish with all of my heart that the presently so clearly visible progress, also in the direction towards spiritual goals, may be a lasting one. The proof had been made that the old times are gone. The people have made the effort, to rise up with youthful energy; this yields success, and along with success, will also come the blessings.

After these general remarks, I can now turn back to myself and to this early morning, when I left Ernstthal, to get help from a noble, Spanish robber-captain. Do not think that had been a “crazy” idea. I was perfectly sane. Though my logic was still that of a child, it was already well trained. My mistake was just that, due to the trashy literature I eagerly consumed, I took the novels for the real life, and therefore I now simply treated life as a novel. The exceedingly rich imagination, nature had gifted me with, turned the possibility of such a delusion into reality.

My trip to Spain lasted only one day. Near Zwickau, lived some relatives of ours. I spent the night with them. They received me kindly and persuaded me to stay. In the meantime, at home, my note had been found and read. Father knew what the direction to Spain was. He instantly thought of those relatives and got going right away, being convinced to surely find me there. When he came, we sat around the table and I told in all of my naive honesty where I wanted to go and also to whom and why. These relatives were poor, simple, honest weavers. There was not a trace of imagination in them. They were simply stunned at my undertaking. Seeking help with a robber-captain! At first, they would not know what to do, what to make of me, and so it was a relief for them to see my father entering the house. He, the hot-tempered man, who at the slightest occasion blew his top, behaved completely differently than usual. His eyes were in tears. He said not a single angry word to me. He hugged me and said: “Never do something like this again, never again!” Then, after a short rest, he left with me - back home.

The walk took five hours. All of this time, we walked silently side by side; he

led me by the hand. I never felt more clearly than at this time, how much he actually loved me. Everything he wished and hoped to get out of life, he projected upon me. I solemnly promised myself, never to let him experience such a pain as today through me again. And what about him? What kind of thoughts might that have been which now echoed through his mind?

He said nothing. When we reached our home, I had to go to bed, because I, the little fellow I was, had walked for ten hours and was extremely tired. We never said another word about my excursion to Spain; but the work at the bowling alley and the reading of those morally destructive novels did stop. In due time, the necessary help came about, without having to be brought in from the land of the chestnuts. The minister recommended me to the patron of our church, the count of Hinterglauchau, and he agreed to support me with fifteen taler per year, an amount which was regarded as sufficient for me to attend the seminary. At Easter 1856 was my confirmation. On Michaelmas [a] I passed the entry exam to the proseminary of Waldenburg and started living at this boarding school.

[a] September the 29th.

So it was not a secondary school where one did obtain the qualifications to proceed to a university, but just the seminary!

There were no academic studies for me, I was to become only a teacher! Only? How wrong! There was no higher position than that of a teacher, and with all of my thoughts, feelings, and actions I was thus concentrated on my present task that I enjoyed everything which was connected with it. Of course, this task was just the foreground. In the background, towering high above it, rose above anything else what had become my ideal since that night when I had seen the Faust: to write plays for the theatre! On the subject of God, man, and devil! Could I not do this as a teacher just as well as if I had been to an academy? Yes, certainly, provided of course that I did not lack talent. How proud was I the first time I wore the green hat! How proud were my parents and sisters as well! Grandmother hugged me and urged: "Always think of our fable! Now, you are still in Ardistan; but you are supposed to rise to Jinnistan. This journey will start today. You have to ascent. Never turn to those who want to hold you back!"

“And what about the spirits’ furnace?” I asked. “Do I have to enter it?”

“If you are worth it, you can’t avoid it”, she answered. “But if you aren’t worth it, your life will proceed without struggle and without pain.”

“But I want to enter it; I want to!” I exclaimed courageously.

Then she placed her hand on my head and said with a smile: “This is up to God. Don’t forget Him! Never forget Him as long as you live!”

I did heed this advice, but have to confess, to be honest, that it was never hard on me. I cannot remember any occasion where I had to wrestle with doubt or even disbelief. In a manner of speaking, the conviction that there was a God who also watched out over me and would never leave me has, at all times, been a firm, inalienable ingredient of my personality, and therefore I cannot at all regard it as a special achievement of mine that I have never been unfaithful to this uplifted, beautiful faith of my childhood. Granted, I also was not entirely free of perturbations of my inner self; but the perturbation came from outside and did not become a part of me in such a manner that it could have persisted. It was caused by the very special manner in which theology and religious education were taught at the seminary.

Every morning and every evening, there were prayers every student was compelled to participate in. This was quite right so. On Sundays and holidays, the entire student body was brought to church. This was just as right so. Furthermore, there were certain ceremonies for the mission and similar purposes. This was also good and fitting. And there was for all classes of the seminary a well thought out, very extensive curriculum on religion, biblical teachings, and hymns. This entirely goes without saying. But in all this, there was one thing missing, the very thing which is the most important part of all religious matters;

this is that there was no love, no kindness, no humility, no forgivingness. The lessons were cold, strict, tough.

It did not have the slightest trace of poetry. Instead of causing delight and enthusiasm, it was repelling. The religious lessons were the ones which were the least inspiring. It was always a pleasure when the hand on the clock reached the number twelve.

All of these lessons were held year by year with precisely the same contents and precisely the same words and expressions. What was taught on this date, was inevitably to be taught next year on the same day again. This worked like an old cuckoo-clock; this all sounded so wooden, and this all looked so faked, so fabricated. Every single thought had been designated to its place among a dozen ideas and was by no means allowed to turn up in any other spot. This did not allow any trace of a warm feeling to form; this killed the inner self. I have never known a single one among my fellow students who would have ever said one favourable word about this form of religious education. And I have also known no one who would have been religious enough to voluntarily fold his hands to pray. I myself have prayed always and at every occasion; I still do this today, without being ashamed; but at that time, at the seminary, I kept it a secret, because I was afraid of my fellow students' smirks.

I would have liked to keep silent about these religious conditions, but was not allowed to, because it is my task, to say everything honestly, what influenced me in my internal and external development. This Christianity of the seminary seemed to me to be without soul to the same extent as it was seeking conflict. It did not satisfy and nevertheless pretended to be the only pure, true teaching. How poor and how godforsaken did this make a person feel! The others did not even accept this as a disaster; they were indifferent; but I, who required religious love, felt sick from the cold and withdrew into my self. Here also, I grew increasingly lonelier, and even more, much more than at home. And here, I became even more of a stranger to my grade than I had been there. This was partially due to the conditions, but also partially due to myself.

I knew much more than my fellow students. I may say so without being



suspected of bragging. Because what I knew was nothing but a mess, an unregulated, unsystematic accumulation of knowledge, which did not benefit me in the least, but only burdened me.

Whenever I might have let anyone notice something of my unfruitful masses of information, I was stared at in amazement and laughed at. They felt instinctively that I was less enviable than lamentable. The others, most of them the sons of teachers, might not have learnt as much as I, but what they had learnt was firmly stored and well arranged in the chambers of their memory, always ready to be used. I felt that I was very disadvantaged compared to them and yet resisted to admit that much to myself and them.

The quiet and busy main part of my work most of all consisted of putting my poor head in order, and this, unfortunately, took more time than I wished. Whatever I built up, kept on falling down.

It was like exhaustingly digging through a pile of snow, which kept on caving in. And in all this, there was one contradiction which simply could not be removed. This was the contradiction between my extraordinarily fruitful imagination and the dryness and absolute lack of poetry in the form of teaching practised here. At that time, I was still much too young, to realize, where this dryness came from. They did not teach that much of what had to be learnt, but rather the manner in which we had to learn. We were taught to learn. Once we understood this, the rest was easy.

We were given lots of bones; therefore our lessons were so almost painfully dry. But out of these bones, the skeletons of the individual sciences were combined, the flesh of which was to be added later. But with me, the very opposite had occurred up to now: I had gathered a huge amount of flesh, but not a single sustaining, supporting bone to go with it. My knowledge lacked a firm bone-structure. In respect to my mental possessions, I was a squid, which had neither internally nor externally something to hold on to, and therefore also no place to feel at home. And the worst part of it was: The boneless flesh of this squid was not healthy, but sick, severely sick; it had been poisoned by the trashy novels of proprietor of the bowling alley. Just now, I started to realize this properly and felt just the more unhappy with this, as I could not talk to a single human being about it, without embarrassing myself. Most of all it was the dryness and what I guess I would have to call soullessness of the lessons at the seminary, which made me realize that I had been poisoned. I found for the skeletons we had been

offered, so that we would breathe life into them, no healthy flesh within myself.

Everything I pieced together and tried to build up inside of me, turned out shapeless, ugly, untrue, and unlawful. I started to grow afraid of myself and kept on tinkering with the form of my soul, to have my insides cleansed, purified, rearranged, and uplifted, without having to turn to outside help, which did not exist anyhow. I would very well have liked to confide in one of our teachers, but they were all so elevated, so cold, so unapproachable, and most of all, I sensed this, no one of them would have understood me; they were no psychologists. They would have given me a puzzled look and left without otherwise acknowledging my presence.

In addition, I had an inborn, irresistible urge to keep my mind busy. I learnt very easily and consequentially had much time to spare. So I secretly wrote poetry; I even composed. The few pfennigs I could spare were turned into writing paper. But what I wrote was not supposed to be just a student's essay, but something useful, something really good. And what did I write there? Most naturally story about American Indians! What for? Most naturally to have it printed! By whom? Most naturally by the the "Gartenlaube" <Garden-Arbour>, a magazine which had been founded a few years back, but was already read by everyone. I was sixteen, then. I sent in the manuscript. After a whole week had passed without any reaction, I asked for an answer. I received none.

Therefore, after another fortnight, I wrote in a stricter tone, and after another two weeks, I asked for my manuscript back, to send it to another publisher. It arrived. Along with it came a letter, personally written by Ernst Keil, extending over four large quarto pages [a]. I was far from appreciating this as I should have. First, he quite thoroughly put me down, making me really honestly feel ashamed, because he most conscientiously listed all the misdeeds I had committed in the narration, of course without me being aware of it. Near the end, the reproach got milder, and in the end, he cheerfully extended to me, the ignorant boy, his hand and told me that he would not be too excessively appalled, if, after four or five years had passed, another one of my Indian stories should end up on his desk. He did not get any, though not due to my fault, but rather the circumstances would not let me. This was my first success in literature. But then, I certainly regarded it as an absolute failure and felt very unhappy about it. Time passed. I rose from the proseminary into the fourth, third, and second [b] grade of the seminary, and it

was in this second grade, when that fate came upon me, which my opponents have so loudly exploited.

[a] quarto: an old paper size. 22.5 x 28.5 cm, 8.86 x 11.22 in.

[b] The grades in German secondary schools used to be numbered backwards.

It was the custom of the seminary that the students had to take turns in performing certain duties for the grade, each one for a week. Therefore, the student concerned was referred to as the “weekner”. Furthermore, in the first grade, there was an “enforcing weekner”, and in the second grade a “light-weekner”, the latter one being in charge of the lighting of the classrooms.

In those days, the classrooms were lit by means of tallow-candles, which had to be replaced as soon as they were burnt down. The light-weekner had to clean the old, worthless candlesticks every day, and in particular, he had to clear away the remnants of wicks and tallow from the grooves. These remnants were either just thrown away or molten down to be used boot-polish or some other kind of grease by the janitor. They were generally to be regarded as worthless.

It was in the beginning of the the week of Christmas when it was my turn to be the light-weekner. I performed this work like everybody else. The day before Christmas Eve, our vacation started. The day before, one of my sisters came by, to get my laundry as well as the little luggage I had to take with me on vacation. She always did this whenever the vacation started. The way she had to take from Ernstthal to Waldenburg took two hours.

That day was no exception. As she came in this time, I was just busy cleaning the candlesticks. She was sad. Things were not good at home. There was no work and therefore also no income.

Mother used to bake at least some cakes for Christmas, as even the poorest people would do. This year, she could hardly afford it.

But there would not be any gifts, none at all, because the money just was not there. There were no candles for the Christmas chandelier. Even my smaller sisters' wooden angles were to be without candles. Three little candles were meant to go with these angles, at five or six pfennig per piece; but when those eighteen pfennig were needed for other, more necessary things, they just had to live with that. This hurt me. My sister was almost crying.

She saw the remnants of tallow, which I had just scratched out of the grooves and down from the candlesticks. "Couldn't some pfennig-candles be made out of these?" she asked. "Quite easily", I answered. "All it takes is some rolled up paper and a wick, nothing else; but it wouldn't burn so well, because all this stuff is still useful for is as grease." "So what, so what! At least we would have some kind of candles for the three angles.

Who owns this garbage?" "Nobody really. I have to get it to the janitor. Whether he throws it out or not, is his business." "So it wouldn't be stealing, if we'd take a bit of it home with us?"

"Stealing. Ridiculous! Nobody would think of it! All of this dirt isn't worth three pfennig. I'll wrap some of it in a piece of paper for you. This we'll use to make three little Christmas candles."

Said, done! We were not alone. Another seminarist was with us; someone from the first grade, one grade above mine. I am reluctant to give his name. His father was a gendarme. This upstanding fellow student observed everything. He did not warn me at all, but was quite friendly, left, and - - - reported on me.

The principal came in person, to investigate the "theft". I admitted very calmly what I had done and returned the "loot" I had taken. I truly thought nothing bad of it. But he called me an "infernal character" and assembled the faculty, to decide about me and my punishment. Just half an hour later, I was informed of it.

I was dismissed from the seminary, I was free to go to wherever I wished. I left right away with my sister - - - for the holy Christmas season - - - without tallow for the Christmas angles - -

- these were very gloomy, dark Christmas holidays. I guess, I did already say that especially Christmas had often been for me a time of sadness, not joy. In those

days of Christmas, holy flames of my soul were quenched out, lights which I held dear. I learnt to differentiate between Christianity and those who call themselves Christians. I had come to know Christians who had acted less Christianly against me than Jews, Turks, and heathens would have done.

Luckily, the department of culture and public education, I had turned to, proved to be more reasonable and more humane than the seminary's management. Without any objections, I obtained the permission to continue my interrupted studies at the seminary of Plauen. There, I got into the same grade, that is into the second one, and after having finished the first grade, I passed the examination to become a teacher, after which I obtained my first job in Glauchau, but soon got to Altchemnitz into a school, belonging to a factory, where the all of the students were rather grown up factory workers. Here, my confessions have to start. I give them without hesitation, according to the truth, as if I was not dealing with myself, but another person, a stranger.

I am going to turn back to my parents' poverty. The examination had required a tailcoat, an expensive matter for our circumstances. Furthermore, as a teacher, I could not continue being dressed like a student, and needed at least some modest supply of laundry and other necessary items. My parents did not have this kind of money; I had to take care of this myself; this means, I borrowed it, to pay it back from my salary in installments. So I had to be economical, thinking twice before I would spend a single pfennig! I limited myself to the bare necessities, and had to do without all expenses, unless they were absolutely unavoidable. I did not even own a watch, though this is quite indispensable for a teacher, who has to be punctual by the minute.

The owner of the factory, the school of which had been entrusted to me, was obliged by contract to supply my accommodations. He chose what was most convenient for him. One of his accountants had also been granted free accommodations, a living room and a bedroom. Until now, he had both for himself; now, my quarters were to be at his place; he had to share with me. By this, he lost his independence and his convenience; he was constantly annoyed

by my presence, and thus one can easily comprehend that I was not particularly welcome by him, and that the idea had crossed his mind, to get rid of this intrusion in some way. Otherwise, I got along with him rather well. I did him every favour I could and treated him, since I saw that he wanted it this way, as the actual master of the lodgings. This obliged him to return my kindness. An opportunity for this came very soon. He had received a new pocket watch from his parents. His old watch, which he now did not need any more, hang unused on a nail at the wall. Its value was at most twenty marks. He offered to sell it to me, because I did not possess any; but I rejected, because if I would eventually buy a watch, it was supposed to be new, a better one. Of course, this was still a long way to go, because I had to pay back my debts first. Then, he himself suggested to me that I should take his old watch with me to school, since I was required to be punctual. I went for it and was grateful to him for this. At first, I placed the watch back on the nail as soon as I returned from school. Later, I occasionally failed to do this; I kept it in my pockets for several hours more, because to me, it would have seemed not that much conscientious, but rather ridiculous, to put so much emphasis on the fact that it did not belong to me. Finally, I even took it with me when I went out and only hang it back up in its place after I had returned at night.

There was no real friendship or even cordial relationship between us. He accepted me, because he had to, and occasionally, he made it a point to let me know that he was not pleased to share his lodgings.

Then, Christmas came. I informed him that I would spend the holidays with my parents and bid him farewell, because I wanted to depart immediately after school, without returning to our lodgings. After the last lesson was over, I went to Ernstthal, which took just one hour by rail, so it was not far to go at all.

Being filled with the joy of the holidays, I completely forgot, to leave the watch behind. When I noticed that it was still in my pocket, I did not care about this at all. After all, there was not even the slightest dishonest intension in my mind. This night with my parents was such a happy occasion. My time as a student was behind me; I had a job; I received a salary. The beginning of my career was there. Tomorrow was Christmas Eve. We already started preparing for the exchange of the Christmas presents.

While doing so, I spoke about my future, my ideals, which all appeared shining most brightly before me in the lustre of Christmas. Father joined my enthusiasm. Mother was quietly happy. Grandmother's old, faithful eyes were shining. After we had finally turned in for the night, I still lay awake for a long time in my bed and contemplated what I had done right and wrong in my life. For the first time, I grew fully aware of my internal uncertainty. I saw the treacherous abyss gaping behind me, but none in front of me, because my path seemed to be, though hard and strenuous, still entirely free from obstacles: to become an author; to achieve great things, but first to learn a great things! To cast off, one after another, all those faults of my inner self, which were the consequence of my wrong upbringing, so that there shall be room for something new, better, righter, noble! With those thoughts, I fell asleep, and when I woke, it was already almost noon, and I had to go to the Hohensteiner Christmas market to buy a few more small gifts for my sisters.

There, I came across a gendarme, who asked me, if I was the teacher May. After I had confirmed this, he told me to come to the town hall, to the police, where I they wanted to question me.

I went along, not suspecting anything at all. First, I was shown into the living room, not the office. A woman was sitting there and sewing. Please, allow me to keep to myself whose wife she was. She was a close acquaintance of my mother, who had gone to school with her, and now she looked at me with anxious eyes. The gendarme ordered me to sit down and left the room for a short time, to give his report. The woman used this opportunity to ask me hastily:

“You've been arrested! Do you know that?”

“No”, I answered, mortally startled. “Why?”

“You're said to have stolen a watch from your roommate! If they'll find it on you, you'll be sent to prison and will be dismissed as a teacher!”

Everything flickered before my eyes. I felt like being hit over the head with a club. I thought of last night, my thoughts before falling asleep, and now all of a sudden there was dismissal and imprisonment!

“But it’s not stolen at all, just borrowed!” I stuttered, pulling it out of my pocket.

“They won’t believe that! Put it away! Return it to him secretly, but don’t let anybody see it now! Quickly, quickly!”

My devastation was indescribable. A single clear, calm thought would have saved me, but it did not occur to me. I just had to show the watch and tell the truth, then everything would have been well; but I was so scared that I was like in a fever and acted like in a fever. I did not put the watch back into my pocket, but into my suit, where it did not belong to, and as soon as this had happened, the gendarme returned to get me. Let be as brief as possible on what had happened now! I committed the insane act of denying the possession of the watch; but it was found, when I was searched for it. Thus, the lie destroyed me instead of saving me; but it always does; I was a - - - thief! I was brought to Chemnitz to appear before the investigating judge, spent the Christmas holidays not with my parents, but locked up, and was sentenced to six weeks in prison. Whether and by what means I defended myself; whether I sought refuge in an appeal, an appellation, any kind of legal remedy, a petition for clemency, a lawyer, I cannot say. My recollection of those days has disappeared, entirely disappeared. For important psychological reasons, I would like to tell everything as openly and comprehensively as possible, but unfortunately, I cannot do this, because all of this has been wiped off my memory, due to rather peculiar psychological conditions, on which I will have to report in the next chapter. I only know that I was entirely lost, and that I found myself again once I was back in the care of my parents and especially of my grandmother. After the strain of recovering, when I had regained enough of my strength, I went to Altchemnitz, to refresh my damaged memory. In respect to the locations, it was in vain; I recognised nothing, neither the factory, nor my former lodgings, nor any other place where I undoubtedly must have been. But suddenly, he stood before me,



my roommate, the accountant. He happened to come my way on the street and stopped, once he had reached me. Him, I recognised immediately, he me too, though he assured me that I looked completely different than before, so very ailing. He gave me his hand and asked me, to forgive him. He had not intended for it to come out the way it did at all. He said, he was so infinitely sorry for having spoiled my career! I gave him an astonished look. Having spoiled my career? Would anybody have been able to do this? Even if the government would not want to hire me any more, there are still enough private jobs available, which are even better payed. And it had also never been my intension to remain a teacher of a public or even factory school; I had entirely different plans and still had them on this day. I just left the man standing in the middle of the street and went away, without a word of reproach.

Yes, I left, but where to?! I could not have guessed it, then. I have said just before in this account that a treacherous abyss was behind me, but none in front of me, and that I intended to achieve great things, but first to learn great things. The first thing was wrong. On the very contrary, the abyss was not behind me, but in front of me. And the great thing I had to learn and to achieve was, to tumble into this abyss, without being shattered and to freely ascend it on the other side, without ever relapsing into it again. This is the hardest task there is for a mortal, and I think I have solved it. - - -

## V. In the Abyss

I now turn to the time which is for me and every compassionate soul the most horrible, but for a psychologist the most interesting of all times. As I take up my pen write this down, I could give this account in such terms of psychology or even criminal psychology, which are most suitable to let an expert comprehend what happened inside of me then; but I am not writing this for a specialist in psychology, but for the general public reading my books, and therefore, I have to abstain from all attempts to practice psychology. Consequentially, I will avoid all technical terms and rather employ an allegoric form of expression than a terminology which is not universally understood.

The event described in the previous chapter had effected me like a blow, like a blow over the head, the impact of which will make a person collapse. And I did collapse! I did rise again, though, but only externally; internally I stayed down in mindless unconsciousness; for weeks, even for months. That it had happened at Christmas out of all times, had doubled the effect.

Whether I had turned to a lawyer, whether I appealed, appellated, or had employed any other kind of legal remedy, I do not know. I only remember that I lived in a cell for six weeks, together with two other men. They were prisoners on remand. Apparently, I was regarded as harmless, or else I would not have been locked up together with persons who had not been convicted yet. One of them was a bank official, the other one an hotelier. I did not care why they were investigated. They were kind towards me and made every attempt to lift me out of the state of internal petrification I was in, but in vain. I left the cell, once my imprisonment had ended, with the same lack of emotion with which I had entered it. I went home to my parents.

Neither father, nor mother, nor grandmother, nor the sisters would have thought of reproaching me with something. And this was perfectly horrible! At that time when I, with all the ignorance of a child, wanted to go to Spain and father brought me home, I had promised myself that would never sadden him again anything similar, and now it had turned out so very differently and so much worse! I was not concerned about my future or about a job; I could have obtained this any time. Now, with matters being as they were, the thing for me to do was not to turn sideways off my path, but to set on that course right now and for ever on the other end of which were those ideals which I bore within the deepest depth of my heart since my boyhood: To become an author, to become a poet! Learning, learning, learning! To work myself up by what is great, beautiful, noble, out of my present deep and low state! To get to know the world as a stage, and the people who swarm on it! And in the end of this hard, laborious life, to write for that other stage, for the theatre, to solve, there, the mysteries which had captured me since my earliest childhood and which, though I felt them then, I was still far, far, far from comprehending!

The process which formed those thoughts and intentions within me was not at all clearly, shortly, and concisely expressing itself, oh no, because inside of me there was now the very opposite of clarity; it was night; there were only a few free moments when I saw further than the present day would allow me. This night was not entirely dark; it had the faint light of dawn. And strangely, it only extended over the soul, not the mind as well.

My soul was ill, not my mind. I possessed the capability to make every logical conclusion, to solve every mathematical problem. I had the keenest insight in everything unconnected with my inner self; but as soon as something approached me, to interact with me, this insight stopped. I was not able to inspect myself, to understand myself, to guide and control myself. Just occasionally, a moment came which granted me the ability to know what I wanted, and then, this wish was my only desire until the next one of these moments came. This was a condition I had never observed before in another human being and never read about in any book. And mentally, I was very well aware of this condition of the soul, but did not possess the power to alter and even less to overcome it. I developed the realization that I no longer was one whole, but a split personality, very much according to the new doctrine, that man is not an individual, but a drama. In this drama, there were several characters, acting out their parts, who at some time were entirely indistinguishable and then again took on their very well distinguished forms.

First of all, there was myself, this is me, who was observing all of this. But who this "me" actually was and where he was within myself, I could not tell. He very much resembled my father and had all of his faults. A second being within myself always kept at a distance. It resembled a fairy, an angel, one of those impeccable, bliss bringing beings from grandmother's book of fairy-tales. It admonished; it warned. It smiled when I obeyed, and it mourned when I was disobedient. The third entity, of course not a physical one, but an appearance on the soul, was nothing less than abhorrent to me. Fateful, ugly, mocking, repulsive, always gloomy and threatening; I have never seen it any other way, and I have never heard it any other way. This is because I have not just seen it, I also heard it; it spoke. It often spoke to me for entire days and entire nights without interruption. And it never wanted what was good, but always just what was evil and unlawful. It was new to me; I had never seen it before, but only from now on, once my inner being was split.

But when, for a short time, it kept silent and I therefore found the time to observe it secretly and attentively, then it struck me as so familiar and well acquainted, as if I had seen it a thousand times before. Then its appearance changed, and its face changed, too. At times, it was from the Batzendorf, then from the bowling alley, or from the Luegenschmiede. One day it looked like Rinaldo Rinaldini, the next day like the robber-knight Kuno of the Eulenburg <owls' castle>, and the day after like the god-fearing principal of the seminary, standing before my tallow-paper.

I did not make these observations of my inner self all at once, but gradually. Many, many months passed, until they had developed to such an extent within me that I was able to behold their image in my mind and commit this to memory. And then, I started to comprehend what all of this was actually about. What occurred within every human being, without him or she being aware of it or even suspecting it, also occurred in me, but with me seeing and hearing it. Was this a benefit, a gift of God? Or was I insane?

If so, I was at any rate not insane in the mind, but in the soul, because I made these observations with an objectiveness and cold-bloodedness, as if this would not concern myself, but someone entirely different, a person who was a perfect stranger to me.

And I lived my ordinary, every day life just as any sane person would, who is entirely unaffected by such psychological events.

The strength and the will to live returned to me. I worked. I taught music and foreign languages. I wrote poetry; I composed.

I formed a small group of musicians, to practice and to perform what I had composed. Members of this orchestra are still alive today. I became the chairman of a glee club, which I conducted at public concerts, in spite of my youth. And I began to write fiction. First, I wrote humorous short stories, then "Village-Tales from the Ore Mountains". I had no problems at all in finding publishers. Good, suspenseful, and humorous short stories are extremely rare and are very well paid. My stories were passed from one magazine to another. It was a joy to see how excellently this was developing. But this joy was ruined in a cruel manner by another development, which took place at the same time and in parallel inside

of me. The split within me grew further. Every sensation, every feeling seemed to demand its own form. I was full of characters who wanted to worry with me, work with me, create with me, write with me, and compose with me. And every one of these characters spoke; I had to hear them. This was enough to drive a person insane! As there had previously been only two characters aside from myself, the bright one and the dark one, so there were now two groups aside from myself. And as more time passed, they became more distinguished, and I recognised them more clearly. There were two hostile forces, fighting against each other: grandmother's bright, luminous characters from the Bible and her fairy-tales against the filthy daemons of this unfortunate rental library from Hohenstein. Ardistan against Jinnistan. The legacy of thoughts from the swamp, I was born into, against the bliss bringing ideas of the highland, which I was seeking. The miasmas of a poisoned childhood and youth against the pure, redeeming wishes and hopes, with which I looked forward to my future; the lie against the truth; the vice against the virtue; the inborn human beast against the rebirth, which every mortal has to seek to become a person of noble spirit.

Every thinking human being who seeks for advancement has to go through such internal struggles. Normally, these are thoughts and emotions, which are competing against one another. But with me, those thoughts and feelings had taken on shapes of visible and audible characters. I saw them with my eyes closed, and I heard them by day and night; they interrupted my work; they woke me from my sleep. The dark ones were more powerful than the bright ones; when they forced themselves upon me, resistance was useless. At ordinary times, my inner world was quiet; then, there was no conflict. But was soon as I started to work, one character after another woke up. Every one of them wanted to change my work according to its wishes. This also very much depended on the topic I was dealing with. Nobody objected against a funny short story. I could finish something like this without an argument, without interruption. But when working on a serious village-tale, numerous voices spoke out for and against me. In those village-tales, I have proven time and time again that God will not permit any mockery of his power, but punishes precisely according to the sin committed. Against this, certain characters within me rose up. But I met with the greatest resistance, as soon as I rose to even higher paths in my work or in my reading.

Whenever I took on a religiously, or ethically, or aesthetically higher topic, the

dark character within me rebelled with all of its might against it and tormented me in a manner which is entirely inexpressible. In order to demonstrate in what manner this occurred and what kind of a torment this was, I want to give an explanatory example: I had been commissioned to write a parody of “Des Saengers Fluch” <The Singer’s Curse> by Uhland [a]. I did so. This parody got the title “The Tailor’s Curse”. A tailor cursed a shoemaker, his ramshackle hovel, and tiny garden, where only two gooseberry-bushes grew. The curse on the house took on the form of the following lines:

[a] Ludwig Uhland (1787-1862)

“The mortgage does await this,  
that you, today, shall fall.

Damn walls, hear what your fate is:

I will destroy you all!”

I wrote this parody, without being disturbed by my inner voices while doing so. Nothing within me rebelled to the slightest extent against such a base thing. Just the luminous character disappeared; it mourned, because I had enough abilities to do better and nobler things. Some time later, I had to write a didactic poem, of which I now remember nothing more than the following verses:

“Once you will comprehend the teachings, Which your own saviour taught to you,  
And in your country heed his preachings, Obey and act as you should do,

Then, mankind will unite in one crowd, From near and far, they’ll join in then;  
They’ll pray to one Lord, all with no doubt; The world’s his church since it began.

Triumphant is the faith which says this: One God, one Lord for evermore.

The names will fade, and what remains is That all roads lead to heaven's door.”

As soon as I had sat down to construct this ambitious poem, a rare clarity came over me, I saw the joyful smile of the luminous character, and a hundred beautiful, noble thoughts hurried towards me to enter my mind. I reached for the pen. But then, I suddenly felt as if a black curtain had veiled my inner self. The clarity was over; the luminous character disappeared; the dark one entered, laughing sarcastically, and throughout my entire inner being a thousand voices echoed: “The tailor’s curse, the tailor’s curse, the tailor’s curse, etc.” So it resounded within me for hours and hours, on and on, endlessly, unrelentingly, and without even the slightest pause, not just in my imagination, but for real, for real. I felt as if those voices spoke not from within me, but right before my very own ear. I tried my best to silence them, but this was all in vain as long as I held the pen in my hand remained on my seat to write. Even after I got up, they echoed forth, and only when I considered to give up all attempts to write this didactic poem, silence instantly followed. But since I had to keep my promise to write it, I soon reached for the pen again. Immediately, this multitude of voiced intoned again: “The tailor’s curse, the tailor’s curse!” and when, in spite of all this, I focused my thoughts on my task, they additionally loudly roared these sentences: “The mortgage does await this, the mortgage does await this; damn walls, hear what your fate is, damn walls, hear what your fate is!” This went on for the entire day and the entire night and even continued after this. Nobody else saw and heard it; no one suspected of what and how terribly I suffered. Anybody else would have described this as madness, but not me. I remained distant and observed myself. In spite of all opposition, I managed to complete my poem on time. But I always had to pay very dearly for such victories; once it was achieved, my inner self collapsed.

Unfortunately, this violent obstruction of my good intentions did not just extend to my studies and work, but to a much larger degree and quite particularly to my lifestyle, my daily routine, as well. It was as if I had brought quite a lot of invisible criminals back home from this cell, in which I had been incarcerated for six weeks; and those criminals, now, had made it their cause to force their

companionship upon me and to turn my mind to their way of thinking. I did not see them; I only saw the dark, mocking, main character from the swamp which was my home town and the trashy novels from Hohenstein; but they persistently talked to me; they influenced me. And when I resisted, they grew louder, to cloud my senses and to tire me, so that I lost the strength to resist. The main point was that was supposed to seek revenge, revenge against the owner of that watch, who had reported me to the police just to get rid of me from his apartment, revenge against the police, revenge against the judge, revenge against the government, against mankind, against basically everybody! I was a model citizen, like a lamb so white, pure, and innocent. The world had cheated me out of my future, my happiness. By what means? By forever regarding me as this what they had turned me into: a criminal.

This was what the tempters inside of me were demanding. I resisted as much as I could, as long as my strength would last.

Everything I wrote at this time, especially my village-tales, I gave an ethical, strictly lawful, royalist tendency. I did this not just for the spiritual support of others, but also for my own.

But how hard, how infinitely hard was this on me! Whenever I did not do as those loud voices demanded, I was assaulted with mocking laughter, with curses and maledictions, not just for hours, but for half days and entire nights. To escape these voices, I used to jump out of my bed and run out into the rain and the snowstorm.

I felt urged to leave, to go so far, so very far away! I quitted my home to save myself, nobody knew where to, but I felt drawn back, again and again. I did not let anyone know what took place inside of me and how inhumanly or even superhumanly I fought, neither father, nor mother, nor grandmother, nor one of the sisters. And even much less someone else, a stranger; I would not have been understood, anyhow; but they would rather have thought that I had just gone crazy. Whether anybody else in my place would have been able to bear this, I do not know, but I hardly think so. I was physically as well as mentally a sturdy, even a very sturdy person, but nevertheless I grew more and more tired. First, there were days, then even entire weeks, when everything within me turned completely dark; then, I sometimes hardly knew and often did not know at all



what I did. At these times, the luminous character within me had disappeared completely. The dark entity led me by the hand. It always walked along the edge of the abyss. At times, I was supposed to do this, at another time that, in any case something illegal. In the end, I only resisted like in a dream. If I had only told my parents or at least my grandmother what state I was in, the deep fall I was heading for would surely have been avoided. And it came, not at home, but in Leipzig, to where some business connected with the theatre had brought me. There I have, though I did not need anything of the kind, bought furs and ran off with them, without paying. How I was capable of doing something like this, I can no longer tell; I probably did not even know it then either. This is because I feel sure and certain, that I could not have possibly acted this way while being fully conscious of what I was doing. I remember nothing at all of the ensuing trial, neither any detail nor any general impression. I also cannot recall how the verdict read. Up until now, I had believed that the sentence had been four years of imprisonment; but according to what the newspapers have recently reported, it was even one month more. But this is irrelevant. What matters is that the gaping abyss had not opened for me in vain. I had plunged into it; I was committed to the state penitentiary of Zwickau.

Before I elaborate on my imprisonment, I have to turn against some prejudices and wrong opinions, concerning everything connected with the penal system, which should finally be done away with. I have heard many an educated fellow prisoner threatening with understandable, but unfounded bitterness, that he would, after he had been released, write a book about his imprisonment, to disclose the equally severe as numerous shortcomings of our legal and penal system. A wise man would smile at such threats, which might be expressed, but are hardly ever carried out. Every released prisoner, if he possesses a sense of honour, is glad to have put the time of his punishment behind him. He would never consider making this public, what up to now only a few people knew about, now that he has managed to get through it. Thus, he will remain silent. And this is good, because his book, if he would write it, would surely prove that there is hardly one among a thousand prisoners who would be able to assess himself and his punishment impartially and objectively. But I believe that I have worked my way up to this objectivity and impartiality; I regard my conclusions as well considered and correct and feel obliged to set the following point straight, here: The times when the prisons could be described as “schools for criminals” are long gone. In our penitentiaries, conditions are not less moral and

not less humane than in freedom.

What was once denounced as “the world of the criminals”, does not exist any more. The inmates of today’s penitentiaries come from all classes of the population. In respect to their professions and intelligence, the same percentages are to be found here as among the “unpunished”.

For the act of the individual, the society as a whole is also to blame. For its own sake, it has to take a part of the guilt from him and onto itself.

The German judges are very well aware of this truth. I have not met a single judge, even among those who had decided against me, whom I could accuse of any wrongdoing. The numerous lawsuits, my opponents virtually force me to conduct, give me ample opportunities to make such experiences, and I have to say that I have nothing but the utmost respect for all of these gentlemen, both in the criminal and the civil courts. I have even experienced one case where a judge in Dresden decided in my favour, though all of his relatives and acquaintances were against me and sought to influence him in that respect. What satisfaction and what confidence in all judges this can give, knows only he who has experienced something like I did.

In respect to the penal system, I have expressed the same thing.

During my entire imprisonment, I have not met a single high-ranking official or guard, who had given me cause for any complaint in respect to his fairness and humane treatment of the prisoners. I would even say that the guards feel the harshness of their duties much more than the prisoners. Hundreds of times, I have admired a kindness, a patience and forbearance, which I would not have been capable of. Prison is no concert-hall and no dance-hall, but a very, very serious place, where a person has to discover who he is. The detainee who is wise enough to realize this will never find any cause for complaint, but only all conceivable help, to erase the memory of what he had been accused of. There

were officials who became so very dear to me, and I am completely convinced that they not just pretended to return my kindness, but were perfectly honest about it.

With the achievements of our justice and penal system nonetheless not being as we would wish them to be, it are truly not the judges and also not the prison officials who are to blame for this; instead the cause is to be sought in an entirely different place: in a flawed legislation, in the foolish self-righteousness of one's dear neighbour, in certain, too deeply rooted forms of prejudice, and last but not least also in our so-called, highly praised "criminal psychology", in which only certain experts believe, but not those who really know human nature and even much less those, all this is in the end about, these are the so-called - - - criminals.

These are the sources from which ever new crimes and recidivisms spring, though all kinds of measures are being taken, to contain these murky waters and to dry them out one after another. Should I give proof for those sources, starting right away with the latter one, the "criminal psychology", I have several works of this most interesting, extremely disputed subject opened up right in front of me, the contents of which are veritably abundant with evidence for my point. One of the authors, a well known prosecutor, distinguishes himself by means of his numerous attempts to turn the legal and penal system towards a milder, more humane course. He has made a name for himself by this. Whenever and wherever this humanisation is discussed, he is often quoted, and he would be a blessing for this cause, if he would not destroy it all again as a criminal psychologist, which he seeks to build up as a pioneer of humaneness. I will not name any names here as well, because I am not concerned with the person, but with the subject. Being, as a humanitarian, worthy of respect in the highest degree, he can be, as a psychologist (i.e. someone who "investigates the soul"), to an almost even higher degree inconsiderate and cruel. In trying to give evidence for his public assertions, he does not stop at including persons into his "psychiatric" studies, who have been punished thirty or more years ago, and have now, by means of hard work, obtained a public position, and he makes them thus recognisable in his writings that everyone knows whom he is referring to. Having been confronted about this by a lawyer, he answered that he, as a scientist, had the right to do this; there was an article of law which would allow

it. I will refrain from adding any critical remarks to this. But even if it were true, that there was such an article, who would force this public prosecutor, for such an article's sake, to act against his own, otherwise evident humaneness and to vivisect with such a knife people who had never done him any harm and whose protection had been his duty as a representative of the government? If this article really exists, it is more than time for parliament, to put it under a serious examination. If every former prisoner, no matter how high he has worked his way up, is forced by this law, to allow those criminal psychologists to publicly put him into their scientific pillory, it is surely not surprising that criminology displays no tendency for improvement.

I will have to return to this point in the further course of my discussion.

As far as the flaws in the legislature are concerned, I only need to point out how completely unprotected someone who has been previously convicted is against certain lawyers. The worst scoundrel can, by means of his lawyer, obtain the confidential criminal records of whomever he would like to ruin; these will then be published, and the poor devil is doomed! A. is a villain; B. is an honourable gentleman, but unfortunately with a criminal record. A. has the intention to destroy B.. He just needs to insult him and wait for B. to sue him. Being the accused, he will then demand that the plaintiff's records be presented. This is done. They are read in a public trial. A. is fined ten marks for his insult; but B. has been cast back into his former contempt and into the previous misery, and he will swear that for someone who had once been punished all resolutions to "better" himself are useless. If he would now revert to crime, this would surely be no surprise. Unfortunately, there are not just a few lawyers, who, entirely without scruples, turn to these most unfair of all means, to conduct lawsuits which cannot be won based on the facts in a personally malignant and ruthless manner. I myself was also faced with such opponents, but I have always seen that our judges never allowed themselves to be influenced by this kind of filth. I am convinced that, more than anybody else, those gentlemen would happily be in favour of a removal of these legal regulations, by means of which, as I have already said, every scoundrel is enabled to dig up things again which are long since past and long since atoned for. Then, the extensive number of repeat offenders due to so-called embitterment might soon be a thing of the past.

To list the foolish self-righteousness of our “dear neighbours”, I was entire justified. This is and continues to be the main cause of the evils, which are to be discussed here. By no means, I want to assert that this is based on a lack of morality. I rather think that we are faced with old forms of prejudice, which have sunk in so deeply that they are no longer recognisable as prejudice, but are regarded as a truth, which no one dares to question. In old times, a “criminal” was outlawed; and today there is no difference. Everyone keeps picking on him; if it is not done openly, it nevertheless happens in secret. When he is looking for work, for help, for justice, he is always last in line after everyone else. In life, there are hundreds and hundreds of situations in which he is regarded and treated as a person of lower value, and it requires an unusual peace of mind and a rare strength of will on his part, to bear this again and again, without allowing himself to be cast back onto his old course. The greatest danger for him is to be found in the fact that his dear neighbours, by and by, will numb or even kill his sense for honour. Once he allows it to come to this, he is doomed, and criminology will never surrender its victim again, being either embittered or having become completely indifferent. This will not and cannot change at all, as long as the old, equally senseless and cruel prejudice is maintained, that every punished person has to be regarded as a “criminal” for the entire duration of his life. Recently, in Charlottenburg, the case occurred that someone who had been punished more than forty years ago, but had conducted himself well since then, had been described as a “born criminal”

by a malicious person. The offended one sued the offender, but the latter was acquitted. Does this not mean that by this a poor man, who has, with all of his willpower, worked his way up out of the abyss and has proven himself for forty years at its top, is cast back down with brutal force? - -

Down there, I also lay. In continuing to report about this, it is not at all my intention, to do this in a manner which readers who are in need for excitement and lust for sensations would wish. To experience these things only once, is more than enough. When being forced to experience them for a second time, by writing them down for others, it is surely justified to keep it as short as possible. I hereby make use of this right.

Upon my arrival at the penitentiary, I was received strictly, but by no means insultingly. He who is polite, complies with the prison's rules, and is not so stupid to keep on maintaining his innocence, will never have cause to complain about a hard treatment. As far as the occupation is concerned which was chosen for me, I was assigned to the clerical office. You can see from this how carefully the conditions of the prisoners were considered by the warden's office. But unfortunately, this care did not bear the expected success in my case. What happened was, that I failed so completely as a clerk, that I was regarded as useless. Having been a new arrival, I had to do the easiest job there was; but even this I could not cope with. This was noticed. They thought to themselves that there must have been something rather peculiar about me; after all, I must have been able to write! Particular attention was devoted on me. I was given different work, the most decent manual labour which was available. I was assigned to the room of the wallet manufacturers and became a member of a team, which produced fine purses and cigar-cases. Including me, this team consisted of four persons, these were a merchant from Prague, a teacher from Leipzig, and what the fourth one was I could not find out; he never talked about it. These three coworkers were kind, good people. They had already been working together for a longer time, were in a good reputation with the superiors, and did their best to make the training and all the rest of this hard time as easy as possible for me. No ugly or even illegal word was ever said between us. The room we worked in held seventy to eighty people. Among them, I noticed not a single one whose behaviour would have reminded me of the assertion, that prison would be the training ground for criminals. On the contrary! Every single one was constantly trying to make as good an impression as he could on his superiors and his fellow prisoners. During my entire imprisonment, I have never heard anything about hatching evil plans for the future. If anybody had dared to utter anything like this, even if he would not have been reported to the guards, he would nonetheless have been rejected in the most determined manner.

The name of the watchman of this room, or this "visitation" as it was called there, was Goehler. I mention his name with great, honest gratitude. He had to observe me and, though he did not know the slightest thing about psychology, just on account of his humanity and his rich experience, he tracked down the innermost part of nature so well, that his reports about me, as it turned out later, almost reached the truth. He had, as I guess all of these watchman had, previously served in the military, in his case it had been the band where he had

played the first piston [a].

Therefore he had been put in charge of the musical corps and brass-band of the prisoners. On Sundays, he had concerts in the visitations and prison-yards, which he conducted very well. He also had to accompany the singers with his instrumental music during the religious services. But unfortunately, neither he nor the Bible teacher, who was in charge of the church corps, possessed the necessary theoretical knowledge, to rework, or to arrange, which is the technical term, the pieces, which were supposed to be performed, for the available personnel. Therefore, both gentlemen had already for a long time been looking for a prisoner, who might be able to fill this void; but there had not been any.

[a] Piston (French): A special kind of cornet, one octave above a trumpet; a.k.a. key-bugle or keyed bugle or Kent bugle.

At this point, watchman Goehler, due to his observation of my psychological condition, got the idea to take me into his brass-band, to see, if this might have a good effect on me. He asked the warden's office and received the permission. Then, he asked me, and quite naturally, I also did not say no. I joined the band. At that time, only the althorn happened to be available. I had never held an althorn in my hands before, but soon I joined in the best I could. The watchman was happy about this. He was even more happy, when he found out that I had learnt about compositions and was able to arrange musical pieces.

Immediately, he reported this to the Bible teacher, and the latter made me one of the church singers. So I was now a member of both the brass-band and the church corps and was busy in going through the available pieces of music and to arrange new ones. The concerts and the performances in church received, from now on, an entirely different character.

I have to mention that this musical work was not my main occupation. By no means, it caused me to be relieved from performing the same amount of work which any other prisoner had to do every day, if he wanted to avoid getting into trouble. This workload was not too much; everyone who is willing to work could

make it. The skillful ones would even make it in a few hours.

Therefore, I was left with amply enough time for my compositions, which I did not even abandon, after I had been transferred out of the visitation of the wallet manufacturers. This was when they fulfilled my profound wish to be by myself.

Right from the start, when I had been committed, I had asked to be given a cell for myself; but a fulfilment of this wish had not been possible. Not until now, after the final psychological judgement had been made about me, I was transferred to the isolation building and received my room right next to the office of its inspector. He was a highly educated and humane gentleman, who was very conscious of his duties, and I became his personal clerk. This had been a job which had not existed up until this point. Let me here draw your attention to this psychologically meaningful point, that at the time of my commitment I had been completely unable to be a clerk, but was now regarded as capable, to perform the job of a clerk, which required great mental carefulness and insight and was the position of the highest confidence in the entire institution. This is because, aside from being the head of the isolation building, my inspector's professional duties also included the preparation of written documents. This work of his concerned the peculiar statistics of our institution and the manner and the tasks of the penal system in general. He wrote the reports which dealt with his subject and was very busy corresponding with all outstanding men of the penal system. My task was to determine the statistical figures, to investigate their reliability, to compile and compare them, and finally to extract result out of them. Basically, this was a very hard, strenuous, and seemingly boring occupation with a set of lifeless numbers; but to piece these numbers together into characters and to breathe life and soul into these characters, to make them speak, this was most interesting, and I may very well say that I have learnt much, very much there, and that this work in my quiet, lonely cell has advanced my progress in understanding the psychology of mankind much further, than what I would have been able to achieve without this imprisonment. That, for this purpose, only the best and most reliable documents were at my disposal, goes entirely without saying. There, I have learnt to understand the most peculiar things. There, I have looked into the deepest depths of human existence and seen things, which others will never see, because they are blind to them. There, I have realized that grandmother's fable was telling the truth, that there is a Jinnistan and an Ardistan, an ethical highland and an ethical lowland, and that the main movement, we all have to participate



in, is not downwards, but upwards, up, up towards liberation from sin, rising towards the nobler state of the human soul. This realization has been the greatest blessing for me; it has even freed me as well. I have heard those voices, I talked about earlier, also in the cell, screaming inside of me. I have fought them, and I have always silenced them. They returned, though; they rose their voices again, but with longer and longer intervals, until I could finally assume, that they had become completely mute once and for all.

Furthermore, I had to manage the prisoner's library, and the official's library was also made available to me. The works collected in the latter were not at all just concerned with the criminal law and the penal system, but rather all fields of science were represented. I have not just read these delightful books, which were so rich in contents, but rather I have studied them and gained very much from them. And there were not just the volumes of the institution's libraries, which were made available to me, but I was also happily granted the opportunity to access books from outside. I felt the irresistible desire, to use the quiet and undisturbed situation in my cell as much as possible to progress mentally, and the officials enjoyed in assisting me in this in every manner which did not contradict the institution's regulations. Thus, the time of my punishment transformed for me into a time of studying, in which I found greater opportunities for being focused and greater possibilities for in-depth studies than any university student would ever find in freedom. I will say more about this great, inestimable benefit, which the imprisonment afforded me, later on. Even today, I am still particularly grateful for the fact that I was not prohibited to obtain books on foreign grammar and to lay, by this, the actual foundation of my later traveller's tales, which are, as is well known, not based on any actual travels at all, but were meant to form an entirely different, up to this point untreated, genre.

But for now, it is not my intention, to elaborate on these studies of mine, but rather I have to concentrate here solely and in particular on the fact that the management of the prisoner's library, which I had been entrusted with, gave me the opportunity to make most important observations and experiences, under the influence of which my work as an author has taken on the shape in which it appears now.

In stating that I got to know what literature, or let me rather say reading material, the mentality of the general public desires, I am asking you to take this statement serious. It should not be said that each librarian in every public library and every rental library could make the same experiences, because this is not true.

A reader in freedom and a reader in prison, this are two entirely different characters. In the latter, reading can actually become a spiritual requirement for his existence. His nature is changing direction, it is turning around. The external personality no longer matters under the discipline of the institution; the internal one emerges. And this is the one which has to be discovered and seized by the officials, by the system of reeducation in such an institution, if the greatly humane purpose of punishment is to be realized: moral uplifting and consolidation, reconciliation between society and the so-called criminal, who have both committed a sin against one another. In freedom, this emergence of the internal personality is the exception, but in captivity it is the rule. During his imprisonment, the prisoner has to do without all of his physical privileges. In the physical respect, he is no longer a person, but just a thing, a number, which is registered in books and by which he is also addressed. Just the more strongly, yes even with an unstoppable vitality, his internal form, his soul emerges, to demand its rights, to satisfy its needs. The body is forced to put up with the prison's clothing and the prison's food. But do not dare to commit the mistake to restrict the soul in the same manner as well! Forcefully, it seeks to break out of the prison's clothing; famishedly, it demands a kind of food, by which it can become ethically sound and strong, to free itself from the bondage, in which it languished up to now. Believe me, no convict wishes to be evil; they all wish to be good. In the deepest bottom of his heart, everyone has the urge to be, not just physically, but also ethically, free, even the seemingly unreformable ones. But from what shall this naked, hungry soul receive good clothing and good food, meaning good in the ethical sense? From itself? From the sermons, held in the institution every Sunday? From the few, short visits of the institution's chaplain and other officials? From the companionship of the other prisoners? However you may answer these questions, the main source of all reeducation, improvement, and uplifting can under conditions like these only be the library. Each prisoner, who conducts himself in such a manner that he does not have to be forbidden to read, receives one book per week. For seven days, its contents provides the spiritual food for his famished soul.

He is not allowed to choose the book; he has to take what he gets. What he is given, can turn out to be his blessing or his misfortune, can enrich his knowledge

or worsen his punishment, can lead him towards understanding himself and the errors of his ways, but it can also offend and harden him. One of my fellow prisoners, an intelligent banker, had, for three quarters of a year, received nothing but old issues of a magazine called “Fraundorfer Blaetter” to read, dry instructions in gardening, which neither interested him, nor could benefit him in any way.

He put up with it, being increasingly embittered, until I got in charge of the library and gave him something more fitting to his needs. An actor, who was a hothead, was thus enraged by the tales of Jeremias Gotthelf, that he had almost been punished for improper behaviour. The last one he had to read bore the title “How Five Girls Miserably Perish with Brandy” [a]. When I gave him a volume by Edmund Hoefler [b], he was as happy as if I had given him a fortune. A social democratic plumber had been victimised by a long series of devotional books. He angrily swore to me that just for these books there could not be any God. He had only gone bankrupt due to his bitter poverty; but the authors and publishers of these scriptures were bankrupt due to self-righteousness and arrogance and deserved at least the same prison sentence as he.

[a] “Wie fuenf Maedchen im Branntwein jaemmerlich umkommen” was published in 1838. Jeremias Gotthelf is a pseudonym for the Swiss author Albert Bitzius (1797-1854).

[b] Edmund Franz Andreas Hoefler (1819-1882).

From these examples you can see how well I first had to get to know my library and then also the needs of its readers. This involved some serious and difficult psychological considerations and led to the sad final conclusion that, basically, of the kind of books we needed there were only a very few. They were not just missing from our prison library, they were also missing from literature in general. I thought of my boyhood, of the little tracts I had read then and of the trash which had poisoned me; I thought further, and I compared. Then, a realization dawned on me.

Are only the inmates of the penitentiaries in confinement? Is not every human being basically a prisoner? Are not millions of people confined by walls, which

might not be visible to the eyes, but the existence of which can nonetheless be felt just too well?

Does it only apply to the inmates of a penitentiary that the body has to be constricted, so that the higher part of our being, the part which came from above, shall reveal itself? Does it not apply to all mortals, and thus to all of mankind, that everything which is low has to be put in bondage, so that the soul, having gained liberty by such means, could uplift itself up to the highest ideal to be found on earth, to the nobility of the spirit?

And are not religion, art, and literature those things which are supposed to guide us from these depths into those heights? The very literature, I, the prisoner confined to my narrow cell, am also a part of!

Proceeding with this train of thought, I arrived at considerations and conclusions, which might seem to be very strange, but were in their essence quite natural. A light shone between my four tight walls; they grew more spacious. At first I felt, then I saw, and finally I understood the concealed and yet intimate connections between the small and the big, the physical and the spiritual, the body and the mind, the finite and the infinite. This was the time, when I started to comprehend those dear, old fables of my grandmother in their deepest meaning. For entire nights, I lay awake and pondered. I was chained to the deepest, lowest, most despised Ardistan and sent all of my thoughts up to the bright, free, Jinnistan. I imagined myself as the lost human soul, which can never be found again, unless it finds itself. This finding of one's true self can never be achieved high up in Jinnistan, but only down here in Ardistan, among the suffering of earth, the torment of mankind, eating the husks of the lost son [a] of our biblical story. My imagination started to put this what I was looking for into a tangible form, to be able to seize it and to hold on to it. It dwelled and lived within me. And not just there, but also outside of me, omnipresent, in every other human being, and also in the entire human race as one large and whole entity. At this time, Marah Durimeh took form within me, this great, glorious soul of mankind, to which I gave the appearance of my beloved grandmother. At this time, Tatallah-Satah for the first time appeared within me, this mysterious "keeper of the great medicine", whom my readers got to know in the thirty-third volume [b] of my works. And at this time, the idea of "Winnetou"

was born as well. Do not get me wrong, it was just the idea, not really him, whom I did not find until later. In those days, the psychological volumes of the officials' library and all others which had been made available to me were - almost devoured, I was inclined to say; but this would not be the truth, because I have slowly analysed them, dissected them word by word, and have marked every word with a thoughtfulness, which is most likely not a very common thing; but I have done this so eagerly and with a hunger, with a zeal, as if my life, my salvation would depend upon me becoming fully aware of my internal condition. And when I finally thought that I was on the right path, I reached back into my childhood and turned back to my old, bold wish "to become a story-teller, like you, grandmother". After all, I was in in one of those places which are the greatest and richest sources of stories to tell, in prison. Here, all this gets condensed and concentrated which out there, in freedom, flows past so easily and thinly, that it cannot be seized and even much less be observed.

And here, the contrasts, which outside intermix like on a plane surface, rise high up like mountains, so that, in this magnification, everything is revealed which would otherwise remain concealed in secrecy. They lay opened up before me, those difficult, scientific volumes on psychology, especially on criminal psychology. Almost every line was impressed on my memory. They contained the theory, a conglomeration of riddles and problems. But what this meant in practice, I could see all around me in a truthfulness, which was just as plain as it was disturbing. What a contrast between theory and practice? Where was the truth to be found? In the opened books or in open reality? In both! Science is true, and life is true. Science commits mistakes, and life commits mistakes. Both of these ways lead via mistakes towards the truth; there, they will have to meet. Where this truth is and what it says, we can only guess.

Just one eye is granted the gift to glimpse ahead at it and this is the eye of - - the fable. Therefore I want to be a stroy-teller, nothing but a story-teller, just as grandmother was!

I only need to open my eyes, to see them recorded, hundreds and hundreds of incarnations of these parables and salvation seeking fables. One in every cell and one on every chair in the workshops. Lots of sleeping beauties, who are just waiting for the kiss of mercy and love to wake them up. Lots of souls, languishing in bondage, in old castles, which had been converted into prisons, or in modern huge buildings, in which kindness goes from cell to cell, from chair to chair, to wake up and to free, whoever proves himself to be worthy of the

awakening and of freedom. I want to be the mediator between science and life. I want to tell parables and fables, with the truth being hidden deeply inside, the truth which by other means cannot be perceived, yet. I want to derive light out of the darkness of my life in prison. I want to convert the punishment, which has come upon me, into freedom for others. I want to turn the severity of the law, under which I suffer, into a great sympathy for all those who have fallen, into a love and mercy, to which there will finally be no “crime” and no “criminals”, but only the sick, again and again nothing but the sick.

[a] “the lost son”: see Luke 15:24: “For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.”

[b] “Winnetou IV”, a.k.a. “Winnetous Erben” <Winnetou’s Heirs>

But no one may suspect, that my stories are only parables and only fables, for if it was known, I would never achieve what I intend to achieve. I have to become a fable myself, I, my own self.

This will surely be a boldness, which might easily ruin me, but what does the fate of one single, small human being matter, when the subject is the great, hugely arising question facing the entire human race? What matters the tiny fate of a despised prisoner, who is anyhow already lost to society, if the manner in which “crime” is regarded and discussed does not change soon!

This was a thought which came to me quite suddenly, but sunk in deeply and never left me again. It gained power over me; it became large. It finally encompassed my entire soul, which was probably because it contained the fulfilment of all this, which already, since my childhood, lived as my wish and hope within me.

I seized it, this thought; I extended and deepened it; I elaborated on it. It had me, and I had it; we both became identical. But this did not happen quickly, it rather took a long, long time, and even harder and more dreary days than the present ones passed by, before I had developed the plan of my work and had it such

firmly fixed, that no further change was to be made to it. I planned to continue writing my humorous stories and village-tales from the Ore Mountains for a while, to make a name for myself among the German readers and to show them that I was absolutely just moving on god-fearing territory. But then, I wanted to turn to a genre, the public was interested in, and possesses the greatest ability to make an impression: to the traveller's tale. To make real journeys the basis of these tales, was no absolute necessity; after all, they were only meant to be parables and only fables, though extraordinarily meaningful parables and fables. Nevertheless, journeys were desirable, to conduct studies, to get to know the various circles in which my characters had to move. Most of all, I had to prepare myself thoroughly, study geography, ethnology, and languages. I had to take my topics from my own life, from the lives around me, from the place where I was at home, and therefore, I could always maintain truthfully that everything I told about was experienced or witnessed by myself. But I had to move those topics out into distant lands and to foreign peoples, to give them the effect they would not have dressed in the familiar garments of home. Set in the prairie or under palm-trees, in the glistening sun of the orient or in raging blizzards of the Wild West, in perils which would evoke the reader's strongest compassion, thus and in no other way all of my characters had to be depicted, if I was to achieve through them what they were meant to achieve. And for this purpose, I had to be, at least theoretically, as much at home in all of those countries which I had to describe as a European could possibly be able to. So I had to work, to work hard and exhaustingly, to prepare myself; and for this, the quiet, undisturbed prison cell, I lived in, was just the right place.

There is a truth of earth, and there is a truth of heaven. The truth of earth is presented to us by science, the truth of heaven by revelation. Science usually proves its truthfulness; what a revelation asserts, the learned will regard as nothing more than believable, but not as proven. Such a true revelation from heaven descends down to earth on the rays of the stars and goes from one house to the next, to knock and to be allowed to enter. It is rejected everywhere, because it wants to be believed, but it is not believed, because it possesses no learned proof of validity.

Thus it goes from one village to another, from one town to another, from one country to another, without being listened to and without being accepted inside. Then, it ascends back up to heaven on the rays of the stars and returns to the one

from whom it came. Weeping, it laments before Him of its pains. But He smiles kindly and speaks: "Do not weep! Go back down to earth and knock at the door of that one person, whose house you have not found, yet: the poet. Ask him to dress you into the guise of a fairy-tale, and then try your luck again!" It obeys. The poet lovingly takes it on and dresses it up. It now begins its journey once again as a fairy-tale, and wherever it knocks, it is welcome.

The doors and hearts are opened for it. Its words are attentively listened to; it is believed. It is asked to stay, because it has become so dear to everyone. But it must go on, on and on, to fulfil the task it had been given. But it only leaves as a fairy-tale; as the truth, it stays. And even though it is not seen, it is nevertheless there and works its influence within the house for all times to come.

So, this is the fairy-tale! But not the kind of fairy-tale for children, but rather the true, genuine, real fairy-tale, the fables and legends, which are in spite of their unseemingly, simple appearance the highest and most difficult of all forms of fiction, due to the soul which lives within each tale. And one of those poets, to whom the eternal truth would come, to be dressed up, I wanted to be! I know very well, how bold this was. But I admit it without apprehension. Truth is so much hated, and the fairy-tale is so much despised, as I am myself; we are a good match. The fairy-tale and I, we are being read by thousands, without being understood, because the depth is not explored. As they say that fairy-tales were only for children, so I am referred to as "author for young people", who would only write for immature boys. In short, I need not apologise at all for having been so bold to wish for nothing more than to be an author of fables and parables. Do not "my life and my efforts" by themselves already seem rather like a fairy-tale, and are there not almost innumerable fables and fairy-tales, my opponents have build up around me! And whenever I protest against this, I am believed just as little as some people believe in the fairy-tales. But as for every genuine fairy-tale, there will finally come the time, when its truth will be evident, so all of my truth will eventually become evident, and what they do not believe from me today, they will learn to believe tomorrow.

Thus, all of my traveller's tales, which I had intended to write, were meant to be read figuratively, were supposed to be symbolic.



They were meant to say something which was not visible on the surface. I wanted to bring something new, something blissful, without putting my readers at variance with the old, the previous.

And what I had to say, I had to make them look for; I could not lay it openly before their doors, because people tend to ignore everything they get so cheaply and only appreciate what they had to fight for with great effort. It would have been an unforgivable mistake, to hint right from the start, that my traveller's tales were to be read figuratively. My books simply would not have been read, and everything I wanted to solve would have remained a fable and a fairy-tale. The reader had to find unsuspectingly what I had to give; he would then regard it as a prize he had fought for and hold on to it for the rest of his life.

But what was this, actually, I wanted to give? This was many things and nothing commonplace. I wanted to answer the questions of mankind and solve the mysteries of mankind. Laugh at me if you will; but this was what I wanted; I have tried it and I will continue trying it. Whether I will achieve it, neither I nor anybody else would be able to know. In carrying out my plan, I might have committed many a mistake, because I am just a flawed human being; but my intentions have been good and pure.

Furthermore, I wanted to publish my psychological experiences. A young teacher, who has been punished, talking about his psychological experiences? Is this not even more ridiculous than the first plan? You may think so if you will; but I have seen in hundreds and hundreds of unfortunate people that the only cause for the beginning and continuation of their misfortune had been that their souls, those most precious entities of the entire creation of earth, had been completely neglected. The mind is the spoiled, conceited teacher's pet, the soul is the rejected, starving and freezing Cinderella. For the mind, there are all kinds of schools, from the simple primary school up to the university, but there is not a single school for the soul. For the mind, millions of books are written, but how many are there for the soul? To the human mind, thousands and thousands of monuments are built; where are those, which are dedicated to the praise of the human soul? Well so, I am saying to myself, let me be the one writing for the the soul, exclusively for the soul alone, no matter whether I will be laughed at for it or not! The soul is unknown. Therefore, many people will either not understand or misunderstand my work, but this should by no means keep me from doing

what I had planned.

This was basically enough for one person; but I did not want just this, I even wanted much more. All around me, I saw the deepest misery of mankind; to myself, I was was its centre. And high above us was the salvation, was the noble state of the human soul, we had to aspire up to. But this task was not just ours alone, but rather it had been given to all of mankind; the only difference was that we, who were staying in a so much deeper place than the others, had to ascent much further and with more difficulties then they. From the depth into the height, from Ardistan to Jinnistan, from a low, lustful person, rising to become a nobly spirited person. How this had to happen, I wanted to demonstrate by two examples, one in the orient and one in America. For these, my very special purposes, I divided earth in my mind in two halves, in an American and an Asian-African half.

There lives the race of the native Americans and here Semitic-Mohammedan race. I wanted to make these two races the subjects of my fables, my thoughts, and explanations. Therefore, my primary task was to learn about the Arabian and other languages as well as the native American dialects. The steadfast faith in Allah on the one side and the highly poetic faith in the “great, good spirit” of the others, fitted well with my own, firm faith in God. In America, a male character, and in Asia, a female character were to represent the ideal, by whose example my readers had to let their ethical intentions grow upwards. The one character became Winnetou, the other one Marah Durimeh. In the west, the plot shall rise, by and by, from the low life of the savanna and prairie up to the pure and lofty heights of Mount Winnetou. In the east, it shall uplift itself from the dunes of the desert up to the high summit of Jebel Marah Durimeh.

Therefore, my first volume starts with the title “Durch die Wueste” <Through the Desert>. The main character of all of these tales was, for the sake of unity, supposed to be always the same, a noble human soul in his earliest stages, who cleanses himself by and by from all the dross of an anima-person. For America he was supposed to be called Old Shatterhand, but for the orient he was to bear the name Kara Ben Nemsi [a], because I took for granted that he would have to be a German. He had to be introduced as the one telling the stories, as the “first person narrator”. This first person is not real, but a fictional character. But even though this “first person” does not exist, everything which is being related about

him shall still be based in reality and become reality. This Old Shatterhand and this Kara Ben Nemsi, this “first person” is meant to portray this great question of mankind, which was created by God himself, when he walked through paradise, to ask: “Adam, *i.e.* human being, where are you?” “Nobly spirited human, where are you? I only see fallen, low people!” This question of mankind has since then gone through all times and all countries of the globe, calling out loudly and lamenting loudly, but never receiving an answer. It has seen people of violence by the millions, fighting, mangling, and annihilating one another, but it never saw a person with a noble soul, who was like the inhabitants of Jinnistan and lived by their wonderful law, that everyone had to be his neighbour’s angel, so that he shall not become his own devil. But eventually, mankind must and will nonetheless rise to such a height, that this question, which had been asked in vain before that time, will receive its bliss bringing answer from somewhere: “Here I am. I am the first nobly spirited person, and others will follow after me!” Thus, Old Shatterhand also travels and thus Kara Ben Nemsi also travels through those countries, to look for nobly spirited people. And wherever he finds none, he gives an example through his own nobly spirited behaviour, how he thinks such a person would have to be like. And this fictional Old Shatterhand, this fictional Kara Ben Nemsi, this fictional “I”, does not need to remain fictional, but has to manifest himself, has to become reality in my readers, who are experiencing in their minds and souls everything just as he does, and who therefore, like my characters, are rising up and ennobling themselves. In this manner, I am contributing my part to solve this great task of enabling the violent people, who are the people on a low level, to develop into the nobly spirited people.

[a] In “Through the Desert” the main character is introduced by his sidekick to a third person by this name. The first person narrator then explains it like this: “The good man had at one time before asked me for my name and actually kept the word Karl in his memory. But since he was unable to pronounce it, he, without thinking much of it, turned it into Kara and added Ben Nemsi, meaning descendant of the Germans.”

While considering these thoughts in my mind, I felt very well that I, by carrying them out, would put myself in a danger which was not to be taken lightly. What if this fictional self would not be understood and the meaning of this “first

person narrator” would not be comprehended? What if they would believe that I was referring to myself? Was it not obvious that everybody who lacked the intelligence or good will to distinguish between fiction and reality, would call me a liar and a swindler? Yes, this was indeed possible, but I did not regard it as probable. After all, I had to equip this “first person narrator”, this Kara Ben Nemsi or Old Shatterhand, with all of the good attributes which mankind had achieved up until this day in the course of its development.

My hero had to possess the highest intelligence, the deepest heart, and the greatest skillfulness in all physical exercises.

Did it not go entirely without saying that in reality, this could never all be found in a single human being! And if I, as I intended to do, would write a series of thirty to forty volumes, it could certainly be presumed, that no reasonable man would get the idea, that a single person could have experienced all this.

No! The accusation that I was a liar and a swindler was, at least for people who think, entirely impossible! This was how I thought then. Yes, I was even firmly convinced that, though I did not describe myself in this “first person narrator”, I could nevertheless maintain with a clear conscience that I had experienced or witnessed the contents of these narrations myself, because they were taken from my own life or at least from my closest environment. It was not at all difficult on me, but rather very easy, and most of all also interesting, to imagine that though Karl May writes those traveller’s tales down, he does it in such a way, as if they were not the product of his own mind, but as if they were dictated to him by this fictional “first person”, which is the great question of mankind. Whether this assumption of mine was right, the future will soon show.

The intention to give some of my characters native American and some of them oriental features led me quite naturally to a deep sympathy for the fate of those peoples. The extinction of the red race, which had been described as unstoppable, started to occupy my mind constantly. And about the ingratitude of the occident against the orient, to which it owes its entire material and mental culture, I had all kinds of serious thoughts. The welfare of mankind demands that there shall be peace between the two, no more exploitation and bloodshed. I was resolved to constantly emphasise this in my books and to kindle in my readers the love for the red race and for the inhabitants of the orient which we

owe them as fellow human beings. These days, I am assured that I have not just achieved this in a few, but in hundreds of thousands, and I am inclined to believe this.

And now here is the main question: For whom were my books meant to be written? Quite naturally for the people, for the entire people, not just for single parts of it, for single classes, for single age-groups. Most of all, they were not solely meant for the young people! I have to put the greatest weight and the sharpest emphasis on this latter statement. If it had been my intention to be or to become an author for young people, I would quite necessarily have had to give up on executing all of my plans and on achieving all of my ideals for ever. And to do this, has never crossed my mind. It is true that I also had to think of the young generation, because they form, not just in a temporal sense, the first stage of the people; they are not just the ones who constantly replenish the people, but they are also the ones who will have to lead the way in the uplifting of mankind for the old and the lazy, to occupy the terrain, discovered by our pioneers, at the quickest pace. But just as they only form a part of the people, this with what I had to address them could also be just a part of what I wrote for the people as a whole. When I say that I wanted to write for the people, I mean mankind in general, no matter how young or how old they may be. But not every one of my books is meant for every person. And yet again, it is for every person, but one after another, depending on whether he develops forward, depending on how much older and more experienced he has become, depending on whether he has gained the ability to understand and to comprehend their contents. My books shall accompany him through his entire life. He shall read them as a boy, a youth, an adult, an old man, at every one of these ages, he shall read what corresponds with the level of experience he has gained. He shall do all this slowly, with thoughtfulness and consideration. He who reads my books indiscriminately and too quickly, is perhaps to be pitied; but at any rate, it is even more of a pity for them! He who abuses them, shall not hold me or them responsible, but only himself. Let me just remind you of smoking, of eating and drinking. Smoking is an indulgence of pleasure. Eating and drinking is a necessity. But to smoke, to eat, to drink anytime, and to smoke and to devour everything available, would not just be foolish, but even harmful. Good, interesting literature shall be savoured, but not be devoured like by a shark! Since my books contain nothing but parables and fables, it goes without saying that the reader is supposed to think about them thoroughly and that they only

belong into the hand of people, who are not just able to think about something, but also willing to do so.

At this time, when I had considered these ideas and made my plans, I had already written and published various things, but I would not have dared to call myself an novelist or even an artist yet.

And does not every real novelist have to be an artist as well. I did not even regard myself as a proper apprentice in this business, but only as a beginner, who is not a part of this business, but just groping his way, like a child trying to take his first steps. And in spite of this all, I already made plans, covering so much ground, extending so far into the future!

Looking over these plans, I ought to have become pretty scared, because undoubtedly, it had to take several men's lives full of work, without disturbances, and without misfortune, to cope with this task I was facing in a genuinely literary, which is to say artistic, fashion. But still, I did not become scared, I rather remained very calm through all of this. I was asking myself: Is it really necessary to be a novelist, and to be an artist, to be allowed to write these kinds of things? Who would want and who could forbid someone to do it? Let's do it without the established world of literature, if it will only turn out right!

And let's do it without art, if it will only have its effect and achieves what it is supposed to achieve! Whether novelists and artists would accept me as a "colleague", I had to ignore then.

Though, I had my individual pride just as anybody else, and I had the highest possible opinion of art. But these thoughts of mine were different than other people's thoughts, especially those of my fellow authors. To be an artist, stuck me as being the highest thing to be on earth, and deeply within my heart, there lived the ardent wish to reach these heights, even if it should not be until the final hour before my death. That night when I got to see the "Faust" as a child, still lived unforgotten in my soul, and the resolutions I had made under its impression still possessed the very same willpower and the same hold over me as before. To write for the theatre! To write dramas! Dramas, which show how man shall and can rise up from the sufferings of earth to the joys of existence, from the slavery of the low urges to the purity and greatness of the soul. To be

able to write something like this, it is necessary to an artist, not just any artist, but a genuine and true one. But all of my conceptions of art were something entirely different than this what today's critics describe as art; and thus I was left with no other choice than to postpone all of my wishes, which concerned me being allowed to be an artist in literature, an artist who is a true, valuable artist, for many, many long years and to remain until then what I was at the time, a beginner, who is not a part of the established business, and who made no pretension to becoming a member of it. As I had always been, as long as I had lived, by myself and lonely, I was already then convinced, that my path as an author would also be a lonely one up to the end of my life. What I was looking for, could not be found in daily life. What I wanted was something absolutely beyond a common person. And what I deemed right, was most probably wrong for other people. Furthermore, I could not forget that I was a convicted criminal. Therefore, to stay entirely to myself and not to bother any more valuable people with my presence, seemed to be the natural thing to do. I was no expert on art. Perhaps, the others were right; I could be mistaken. In any case, my ideal kept me going: In the end of my life, once I was fully matured, a great, beautiful work of poetry was to be created, a symphony of redeeming thoughts, in which I ventured to produce light out of my darkness, happiness out of my misfortune, joy out of my torment. This was for later, when death will first announce his presence. But for now, my job was to learn, to learn a lot and to prepare myself for this great project, so that it would not fail. Now, I would write fables and parables, in order to extract the truth and the reality out of them in the end of my life and to put these onto the stage!

But these parables are not short texts like, for example, those wonderful parables of Christ, but long narratives, in which many characters appear and act out their parts. And they are numerous; they were meant to fill a large number of volumes and supply the material for that other great task, later on, with which I want to conclude my work. Thus, they cannot be carefully executed paintings, but only pen-and-ink drawings, only sketches, first exercises, etudes [a], which must not be measured by those standards which only apply to genuine works of art. I am neither able, nor willing, nor allowed to be another Paul Heyse [b], who has achieved perfection in this art, but rather my task is to chisel crude blocks of marble and alabaster from highly situated quarries, to be used in subsequent works of art, the shape of which I cannot more than hint, because the time to create them is not yet available to me. I give these very hints in these fables,

which are interjected into my narrative parables and form the spots on which the interest of the reader is concentrated.

Therefore, art critics do not need to deal with my traveller's tales, because it is not my intention at all to give them an artistic form or even perfection. They have to be like the simple, plain arm-and foot-bracelets of the Arabian women, which are meant to be nothing more than silver rings. Their value is in the metal, not in the work. A painter, hastily drawing sketches in preparation for a great painting, would surely be astonished by a critic, measuring these sketches by the same standards, he would then later have to use on the painting.

[a] etudes: studies, exercises (French) [b] Paul Heyse (1830-1914) won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1910.

This is all I want to say right now about these plans, which formed within me at this time and from which I did not depart and which I have carried out up until this day. They did not appear suddenly, and they did not appear all at once, but slowly, one after another. And they did not mature quickly, but it took months and years, until I had fully decided on one aspect after another. But I also had enough time for this. I have made a kind of agenda of my plans and their execution; I have kept it as a sacred treasure and still possess it today. Every thought was dissected into its parts, and every one of these parts was written down. I even made a directory of the titles and the contents of all these traveller's tales, I wanted to tell. Though I did not precisely go by this directory, it was nevertheless very useful to me, and I still benefit today from topics which had already then taken form within me. I also wrote busily; I wrote manuscripts, to have as much material as possible, to be published right after my release. In short, I was enthusiastic about my project and, though I was a prisoner, I felt infinitely happy about the prospects for a future, which promised to become an not entirely ordinary one, as it seemed I had every reason to hope.

Destiny seemed to agree with my intentions. It granted me, as if it wanted to compensate me for all the suffering, a rich, highly welcome gift: I was pardoned. The warden's office had applied for clemency on my behalf, due to which my



prison term was reduced by a full year. My conduct was evaluated with the highest mark and I received an attestation of my trustworthiness, which eased my way back into life outside and spared me from all kinds of trouble with the police. He who knows about these things, will be able to appreciate what this means!

It was a beautiful, warm, sunny day, when I left the institution, armed with my manuscripts to fight the obstacles of life. I had written home, to inform my family about my return. How was I looking forward to this reunion. I had no reason to be afraid of accusations; this had already been settled in letters. I knew that I was welcome and that I would not get to hear a single word which would hurt me. Most of all, I was looking forward to seeing grandmother. How much must she have worried and grieved! And how much would she want to extend her old, dear, faithful hand to me.

How delighted would she be about my plans! How much would she help me to carry them out and to get as much as possible out of them! I went from Zwickau to Ernstthal, this was precisely the way I had gone that time as a boy, to seek help in Spain. You can imagine what thoughts accompanied me on this way. On that way home with my father, I had promised myself never to sadden him with something like this again; but how badly had I kept my word!

Should I make similar resolutions today, the fulfilment of which could never be guaranteed due to the powerlessness of man? The “fable of Sitara” appeared before me. Could it be that I was one of those whose souls were received at birth by the devil, to be hurled into misery, so that they would be lost? All resistance and rebelling is useless; they are doomed. Does this apply to me as well?

My thoughts became more and more gloomy, the closer I came to my home. I felt, as if evil premonitions were coming at me from this direction. It seemed as if my joyful confidence was trying to leave me; I had to try hard to hold on to it. From the Lungwitzer hill, I looked over the small town. There before my very eyes, were those winding paths, I used to walk so often, while desperately struggling with those frightful inner voices, calling out to me day and night without pausing these words: “the tailor’s curse, the tailor’s curse, the tailor’s

curse". And what was that? While thinking of it, I heard the very same voices echoing within me, very clearly, as I used to, only from a far, but they seemed to get closer, "the tailor's curse, the tailor's curse, the tailor's curse!" Was this supposed and willing to start all over again? A sudden fear came over me, a fear as I had never felt before, and I hurried away from this place, away from this memory, down the hill, through the town, home, home, home!

I arrived sooner than I had been expected. My parents still lived on the first floor of the same house. I walked up one flight of stairs and then another to the attic, where grandmother had always liked spending her time the most. I wanted to see her first and only then father, mother, and the sisters. Then, I saw the few things she had owned; but she was not there. There was her chest, with blue and yellow flowers painted on it. It was locked, the key was not in the lock. And there was her bed; it was empty. I rushed downstairs into the living-room. There sat my parents. The sisters were absent. They were considerate. They had thought, the parents had the right to go first. I did not even greet them, but asked where grandmother was. "Dead - - -

deceased!" was the answer. "When?" "Last year." Hearing this, I fell onto a chair and lay my head and arms on the table. She was no longer alive! It had been kept from me, to spare me, to avoid making the imprisonment even harder on me. These might have been rather good intentions; but now it hit me just the more powerfully. She had not been really sick; she had just simply pined away, because of the grief and suffering for - - - me!

It took a long time, before I rose my head again, in order to greet the parents now. They were startled. Later, they told me that my face had looked worse than that of a corpse. The sisters joined us. They were happy about the reunion, but they looked at me so strangely, so timidly. This was nothing else but a reflection of my own face. Though I tried my best, I could still not fully conceal the blow which had just hit me. I wanted to know only things about grandmother for now, nothing else, and they told me. She had talked a lot about me, but never a single word which would necessarily have offended me, if I had been present.

And she had never complained or even wept. She had said that now she knew

that I was one of those souls which had been hurled over to the wrong side at their births, to be destroyed there. Now, she was convinced that I had to go through the spirits' furnace, to suffer all the torment of earth. But she knew that I would not scream, I would bear what I had to bear, and force my way up to Jinnistan. The closer she came to death, the more exclusively she only lived in her world of fairy-tales, and the more exclusively she talked about nothing else but me. On one of her final days, she said that the cantor, who had died a long time before, had been with her that night. He had been our neighbour. Those two houses were connected. Then, she said, the wall had suddenly opened in the darkness and a bright light had filled the room, but it was no ordinary light, but rather a light she had never seen before. Lit by this light, the cantor had appeared. He had looked just as he used to when he was still alive. Slowly, he had come up to her bed, had greeted her with a friendly smile, as he had always done, and then, he had said that she should not worry about me at all; I might very well fall as anybody else, but I could not stay down; I would be given a hard time, but I would surely reach my goal. Having said these words, he again nodded at her in his friendly manner and left just as slowly as he had come, back through the gap in the wall. It closed behind him. The light disappeared; it became dark again.

After she had told this, it had been as if a part of this unknown, previously unfamiliar light was still reflected by her face, and it was still in her features, once she had closed her eyes and stopped breathing. Her death had been soft, peaceful, blissful; but I was not feeling peaceful and blissful at all, when I was told about it. Recriminations formed within me, but none of the kind which are mere thoughts, like in other people who do not have the same tendencies as I, but recriminations of a much more essential, much more compact kind. I saw them coming up within me, and I heard what they said, every word, yes really, every word! This were not thoughts, but characters, genuine beings, which did not seem to have anything in common with me, and yet they were identical with me. What a puzzle! But what an unusual, terribly frightening puzzle! They were like dark characters which used to scream inside of me in the past, which I had - - my God, as soon as I had thought of them, they were back, just as I used to be forced to see and hear them inside of me. I heard their voices as clearly, as if they were standing in front of me and were talking to me instead of my parents and sisters. And they stayed. When I went to bed, they lay down to sleep with me. But they did not sleep and did not let me sleep either. It started again, the former

misery, the former torture, the former fight with these incomprehensible powers, which were just the more dangerous, since I could not discover at all, whether they were parts of myself or not. They seemed to be it, because they knew every one of my thoughts, even before I grew fully aware of them myself. And yet, they could not possibly be a part of me, because what they wanted was almost always the opposite of my own wishes.

I had put an end to my past. The part of my life which was still to come was supposed to be entirely different from the part I had left behind. But those voices were trying hard to drag me back into the past with all of their might. As before, they demanded that I should seek revenge. Now more than ever, I was to seek revenge for the precious time I had lost in prison! They grew louder day by day; but I resisted them; I pretended to hear nothing, nothing at all. But even using the greatest strength, I could not stand this for more than a few days. In the meantime, I visited a few publishers, to negotiate the publication of the manuscripts, I had written in prison, with them. In doing so, it turned out that during my absence, the voices within me became just the more silent, the further I went from home, and became more clearly again, the closer I came to my home again. It was as if those dark characters resided there and could only attack me, whenever I was so imprudent to go there. I decided to put this to the test. I took the pay for my stories and made a longer trip abroad. Where I went, I will have to tell in the second volume of this work, in which I am planning to devote more space to my travels and their results than I could spare here. During this journey, these images disappeared entirely; I became completely free of them. But instead, an very unusual compulsion to return home came over me. This was no healthy, but a sick urge; I felt this very well, but it grew so strong that I lost my power to resist and gave in to it. I returned home, and as soon as I was there, everything I thought I had done away with came over me again as violently as ever. The struggle started anew.

Incessantly, I heard the order inside of me, to seek revenge against human society by violating its laws. I felt that, if I should obey this order, I would be a most dangerous person and gathered up all of my strength to fight against this horrible fate.

I consider it necessary to state here that I did not regard my condition as pathological at all. All of my ancestors, as far as I knew them, had been both

physically and mentally thoroughly healthy people. There was nothing atavistic in me. This which had attached itself to me in this respect had surely not been generated inside of me, but had come over me from outside. I worked busily, almost day and night, as I had generally always found my greatest joy in my work. My stories were eagerly bought.

So, I was suffering no need at all, especially since I lived with my parents, which were now also better off than they used to be.

Even if I had earned nothing for myself, I would have had all I needed to live. During this work was repeated what I had already described before. Whenever I wrote something ordinary, I was not obstructed in the least. But as soon as I turned to a higher topic, a mentally, religiously, or ethically more valuable task, forces stirred inside of me, which rebelled against this and kept me from performing my work by interjecting the most trivial, most stupid, or even most illegal thoughts, while I was writing. I was not supposed to rise up; I was supposed to stay down. They were joined by an old, very well known scoundrel, whom nobody may trust, no matter how much flattery he may use; I am talking about thirst. A disgust for liquor is part of my nature; if I drink it at all, it is only as a medicine. Wine had been out of my reach up until now, if for nothing else than for the price, and I also by no means have that kind of a liking for beer which one must have, to become an alcoholic. But now, strangely, I always felt a strong thirst, whenever I passed by an inn on my walks, and also in the evening, when others had finished their work, the desire came over me to put down the pen and to go to the bar, as they did. But I did not do it. Father did it. He could not very well do without his glass of simple beer and his smaller glass of hard liquor. But I did not feel like it and stayed at home. This was by no means a sacrifice for me and was not hard on me, oh no. I am only telling this, because it is psychologically interesting, since it strikes me as rather strange that this thirst for alcoholic beverages, which is so contrary to my entire nature and is otherwise so completely unknown to me, only appeared whenever those voices had the upper hand within me, but never at any other time!

So much, I had been looking forward to presenting the plans of my work to grandmother; now she was dead. Thus, I discussed them with my parents and sisters. Father had other things on his mind now. He was going through some kind of a social transformation and therefore of no use to me, especially since he

never stayed at home in the evening. The sisters also had other interests. My entire train of thought was incomprehensible to them. So, I was just left with mother. In the evening, she sat, quietly knitting stockings, by the table, where I wrote. I enjoyed so very much putting the thoughts to her I kept my pen busy with. She calmly listened to me. She nodded in agreement. She smiled encouragingly. She said a dear, consoling word. She was like a saint. But she did not understand me either. She only felt it, had a hunch of it. And she wished with all of her heart that everything should turn out the way I yearned for it to be. And when she saw how firmly and unwaveringly I believed in my future, she believed as well and was as glad as a mother can be whose child is still thus fortunate, to be able to rely on God, mankind and himself. But I felt lonely, lonely as always; because even in the entire town, there was not a single person who would have been willing or even able to understand me. And for me, for me in particular, being thus harshly besieged in my inner self, this loneliness was dangerous in the highest degree. There was nothing I needed more than the company of someone who would understand me.

But I was always on my own, though not externally, but internally, and thus, I was almost incessantly and unprotectedly subjected to those characters, who wanted to subdue me. And in the midst of all this vulnerability, I was now also seized by other enemies, which, though they were not internal, but external, were still to the same extent out of the grasp of my hands.

Due to her profession, my mother had to visit other families all of the time. They confided in her. They liked her. She was told everything, without feeling the need to explicitly ask her to keep it confidential. She got to know everything which happened in our little town and the surrounding area. Somewhere, there had been a burglary. Everyone talked about it. The perpetrator had escaped.

Soon, there was another one, carried out in the same manner. In addition, there were some cases of fraud, probably pulled off by impoverished, young craftsmen. I did not even listen, when the conversation turned to this, but noticed after some time that mother was even more serious than usual and regarded me, when she thought she was unobserved, with such a peculiar, pitiful look.

In the beginning, I stayed quiet, but soon, I thought that I had to ask her for the reason. She did not want to answer; but I asked her, until she did. There was a

rumour going around, an incomprehensible rumour, that I was this burglar. Who else should be suspected but me, the former prisoner? Externally, I laughed about it, but internally I was outraged, and I had a few hard nights. There was a roaring inside of me from nightfall until morning. The voices screamed out to me: "Fight us as much as you will, we won't let you go! You belong to us! We will force you to get even! To the world, you are a scoundrel and have to continue being a scoundrel, if you want to have your peace!" So I heard it at night. When I wanted to work by day, I could not achieve anything. I could not eat. Mother had told it to father as well. Both asked me not to let this matter be so hard on me.

They could speak up for me. After all, they knew very well that I had not left the house at the times in question. What we found out, was all said in confidence. No name was given. Therefore, there was nothing tangible, I could have used to defend myself.

But it got worse. The local police was against me. I had been dismissed with an attestation of trustworthiness, and therefore, I had escaped their supervision. Now they thought to have a reason for investigating me. A few new pranks were pulled off, the perpetrators of which necessarily had to possess some intelligence. It was believed that this would point to me. This was at the same time when the before mentioned "Luegenschmiede"

<forge of lies> started to form. New rumours circulated with romantic embellishments. The sergeant inquired unofficially, where I had been on certain days and at certain times. I was stared at, wherever I went in public; but as soon as I returned these looks, they swiftly turned away. Then, I met a poor, but decent fellow, a schoolmate, who had always liked me, and even now, still felt close to me. He was literally clumsy and unforgiveably honest. He thought it was everyone's duty to be crude. He could not stand it any longer. He came to me and told me, after I had given him my word by shaking hands that I would not tell on him, everything what had been said about me. This was so stupid and yet so outrageous, so careless and unscrupulous, so - - so - - so - - so - - I found no words to thank this poor, well-meaning person for his painful honesty. But when he saw my face, he ran off as quickly as he could.

This was a hard, a fateful day. I felt the urge to run out of the house. I ran about

the forest and did not return home until late at night, deadly tired, and went to bed, without having eaten anything. In spite of my tiredness, I found no sleep. Ten, fifty, or even a hundred voices mocked me from inside with incessant laughter. I jumped up from my bed and ran away again, out into the night; where to, where to? I did not even pay any attention to this. It seemed to me, as if the characters from inside of me had left my body and were running next to me. Ahead of them all ran the pious principal of the seminary, followed by the accountant who had denied letting me borrow his watch, a pack of bowlers with bowling balls in their hands, and the robber-knights, robbers, monks, nuns, ghosts, and spooks from the trashy library at Hohenstein. These pursued me all about; they chased me to and fro. They screamed and cheered and mocked, so that my ears were ringing. At sunrise, I found myself climbing up a deep, steep quarry. I was trapped; I could not get out. There they got me, and they would not let me get back down either.

There I was stuck between the sky and the ground, until the workers came and got me down with the help of a few ladders.

Then, it went on, on and on and on, all day long, all of next night; then, I collapsed and fell asleep. Where, I do not know.

It was on the narrow ridge between two fields of rye. A thunder woke me up. It was night again, and the rain of a thunder-storm was pouring down. I hurried away and reached a field of turnips.

I was hungry and pulled out a turnip. With it, I reached the forest, crawled under the densely growing trees, and ate. After this, I fell asleep again. But I did not sleep tight; I kept on waking up. The voice woke me up. They mocked me constantly: "You've turned into a beast, eating turnips, turnips, turnips!"

When the morning broke, I got a second turnip, returned to the forest, and ate. Then, I sought a clearing and let the sun shine on me, to get dry. Here, the voices kept silent; this calmed me down. I found a long, though only light sleep, during which I kept on tossing and turning from one side to another and was tortured by the short, upsetting images of a dreams, which suggested to me that at one time I was a bowling-pin, being knocked down, then again a gipsy from Preziosa, and then again something even worse. This sleep only made me even more tired, instead of strengthening me. I broke out of it, when night fell, and left the forest. Stepping out from under the trees, I saw the sky red as blood; smoke rose up to



it. Surely, there was a fire.

This had a rather peculiar effect on me. I did not know where I was; but I felt compelled to go there, to look at the fire. I reached a rocky slope, which seemed familiar to me. There, I sat on a rock and stared into the blaze. Though it was a house which was burning, the fire was inside of me. And the smoke, this thick, suffocating smoke! It was not over there with the fire, but here with me. It enveloped me and invaded my soul. There it clustered into shapes, which developed arms and legs and eyes and faces and moved inside of me. They spoke. But what? Only later, much later, I came to understand how such internal abominations are generated. Then, I did not understand it yet, and thus they could have this horrible effect, against which my nerves, though being strained to the extreme, had no power to resist any more. I collapsed, just as the burning house over there collapsed, once the flames became smaller and smaller and finally were extinguished. Then, I gathered my strength to get up and leave.

Inside of me, everything was extinguished as well. I was stupid, perfectly stupid. My head was as if it had been enveloped in a thick layer of clay and chaff. I could not find any thoughts. I did not even look for them. I walked unsteadily. I walked without knowing where to. I stumbled on, until I finally reached a town, the churchyard of which was by the side of the road I had been walking along. I leaned against the cemetery's wall and wept. This might have been unmanly, but I did not have the strength to prevent it. These were no liberating tears. They brought me no relief; but they seemed to cleanse and to strengthen my eyes. I suddenly saw that it was the churchyard of Ernstthal, where I stood. I was just as familiar with it as with the road, where it was at; but today, I recognised neither.

The morning dawned. I slowly went down the path the funeral processions took, across the market square, and quietly opened the door of our house, walked just as quietly up the stairs, to our lodgings, and there, I sat on a chair by the table. I did this without plan, without a free will, like a puppet, pulled by its strings. After a while, the door to the bedroom opened. Mother came in. She was in the habit of getting up early on account of her profession. When she saw me, she was startled. She quickly pulled the door shut behind herself and said excitedly, but quietly:

“For God’s sake! You? Has anybody see you come in?”

“No”, I answered.

“How do you look like! Quickly, get out of here again, as far away as possible! Over to America! Or else they’ll catch you!

If they’d lock you up again, I wouldn’t survive that!”

“Go away? Why?” I asked.

“What have you done; what have you done! This fire, this fire!”

“What about the fire?”

“You have been seen! In the quarry - - in the forest - - in the field - - and yesterday, also by the house, before it burnt down!”

This was really horrible, nothing less than horrible!

“Mo - - ther! Mo - - ther!” I stuttered. “You wouldn’t believe that - - - “

“Yes, I believe it; I have to believe it, and father, too”, she interrupted me.

“Everybody is saying it!”

She said this hastily. She did not cry, and she did not whine; she was so strong when she had to bear a burden on her soul. She continued without catching a breath: “For God’s sake, don’t let them catch you, most of all not here with us in the house! Go, go! Before the people wake up and see you! I mustn’t say that you’ve been here; I mustn’t know where you are; I mustn’t see you any more! So go, go! When it has come under the statute of limitations, you’ll come back!”

She quietly rushed back into the bedroom, without having touched me and without waiting for another word from me. I was alone and grabbed my head with both hands. There, I felt so very clearly this thick layer of clay and chaff. This person standing there, this wasn’t me, or was it? Him, in whom even his own mother did not believe any more? Who was this fellow, who looked like a tramp in his dirty, wrinkled clothes? Get him out of her, just out! Be gone, be gone!

I still had enough of my mental faculties left to open the wardrobe and to change into another, a clean suit. Then, I left.

Where to? My memory fails me. Again, I was as sick as I used to be. Not sick in the mind, but in the soul. The internal characters and voices had me completely under their control. When I make an effort to remember these times, I feel like someone who has seen some play at the theatre fifty years ago and is now, after all of this time, expected to know what had happened from one moment to another and how the scenery had changed. Single images are left in my memory, but they are so blurred that I cannot say for certain what part of them is true and what is not.

In those times, I have obeyed those dark characters, who lived inside of me and controlled me. What I have done, will seem unbelievable to everyone who has not made such an experience. I was accused of having stolen a baby carriage! What for? An empty purse, containing only three pfennig! Other things are more credible and some have been proven directly. I had been arrested, and wherever

something had happened, I was brought there, hoping that I was the perpetrator. This was a very interesting time for the regulars or the Luegenschmiede of Ernstthal. There, almost every day, new stories were told or new variations of old ones were created on all the stuff I was supposed to have done. Every tramp who entered the area of these fairy-tales used my name to sin on my behalf. Even for a man who was a prisoner externally as well as internally this was too much. During a transport, I broke my bonds and disappeared. Where I went, I intend to report extensively in the second volume, where I will be giving an account of my travels. For now, there is nothing more to tell than what I have mentioned before, this is that my soul became just the more free, the more I distanced myself from my home, that out there, far from home, I was seized by an irresistible urge to return home, and that I was just the more freed from this, the closer I came again to the place where I was born. Is there anybody who could get to the bottom of this? I partly followed that incomprehensible compulsion, partly I returned out of my own free will, for the sake of my good plans and my future. If I had sinned, I had to do penance for it; this went entirely without saying. And before this penance was not done away with, there could not be any profitable work and no future for me. So, I returned home five months later, to give myself up to the court of law, but unfortunately, I did not do this straight away, as it would have been the right thing to do, but I was again subdued by these forces within me, which appeared again and prevented me from doing what I had been planning. The consequence of this was that I was apprehended, instead of being able to give myself up voluntarily. This worsened my situation to such an extent that I fully comprehend the severity which the judge, who was pronouncing my sentence, applied. But just as much, the behaviour of the lawyer, who had been appointed by the court as my defence attorney, cannot be comprehended. He did not defend, but incriminate me, and did so in the worst way. He had the delusion that he could or should practice criminal psychology at this welcome opportunity, and yet, he lacked basically everything which is needed to solve such a task even to some extent. I very well might have denied it all, but rather confessed to everything I was accused of straight out. I did this, to get rid of this affair, no matter what the price may be, and to lose as little time as possible. The lawyer was unable to comprehend me or what was going on in any other not entirely commonplace soul. The verdict was four years in prison and two years under police supervision.

However hard it is for me to write this down for the public to read, I cannot relieve myself of this duty; it has to be this way. I do not feel sorry for myself, but for my poor, law-abiding parents and sisters, my parents whom I still feel

sorry for in their graves, because their son, for whom they had such great, perhaps not entirely unfounded hopes, had been forced by the infinite cruelty of the facts and conditions to make such confessions.

I would not think of listing the misdeeds, I had been accused of, here. To my executioner, flayer, and knacker, is something I will leave up to this abysmal lack of honour, which has crucified me ten years ago and has not stopped for a single moment during all of this time inventing ever new ways to torture me. Let it continue digging through these faeces, to delight all of those base creatures who sustain their lives on these matters. And just the same, I am not willing to make a sensation out of this renewed imprisonment of mine. I simply have to report of it, to tell the truth, and then, to hurry on, bidding my farewell to this apparent abyss, which is actually no abyss at all.

My punishment was hard and long, and the additional two years under police supervision could not possibly have been interpreted in my favour, when was committed to prison. So, I was expecting a strict treatment. It turned out to be severe, but it did not hurt. An institution's management acts quite right in showing no prejudice, but waiting calmly whether and how a new prisoner complies with its rules. Well, I did comply! Of course, this time my profession got me no special consideration. I was assigned to the occupation, where they happened to need workers at that time. I became a cigar-maker. I asked for a cell for myself; my wish was granted. For four years, I have inhabited the same cell, and even today, I still think back on it with that peculiar, grateful sentiment which a quiet, not cruel place of suffering deserves. I also started to like my work. It was most interesting to me. I became acquainted with all blends of tobacco and learnt to manufacture all kinds of cigars, from the cheapest to the most expensive. The daily workload had not been set too high. It depended on the kind of cigar, the willingness to do a good job, and on one's skillfulness. Once I had enough training, I easily fulfilled my quota and still had hours or half days left.

To be able to use this time for myself, was my most heartfelt wish, and it was granted to me sooner, much sooner than I had thought possible.

Let me emphasise here once and for all, that to me, nothing happens by chance. Every one of my readers knows this. To me, there is only providence. So it also was in this case. The church of the penitentiary of Waldheim had a Protestant and a Catholic congregation. The Catholic Bible teacher played the organ during the Catholic services. But by now, he had become more and more overburdened with new obligation and lots of work that he had to look for someone who could take over playing the organ in his place, especially since he had to read the sermon whenever the priest was unable to come and therefore could not play the organ as well. The warden's office allowed him to look for a substitute among the prisoners. He did so. There was quite a number of sentenced teachers among the prisoners. They were examined. Why they did not take anybody else, I do not know.

They had all been there for a longer amount of time than I and thus had time to obtain the trust which is needed for filling such a position. But I had been committed with nothing less than good attestations of character, could not possibly escape the future police supervision, and had not found any time yet to show that I nevertheless deserved their trust. This is for me the reason why I presume that it was no coincidence, but providence. The Bible teacher came into my cell, talked to me for a while, and then left, without telling me anything. A few days later, the Catholic priest came as well. He also left after a short while, without mentioning the reason for his visit. But the next day, I was escorted to the church, seated in front of the organ, was presented with sheet music, and had to play. The officials sat below in the nave of the church, so that I did not see them. Only the Bible teacher was with me, who presented me with my tasks. I passed the test and had to appear before the warden, who informed me that I had been assigned to playing the organ, and that I therefore had to conduct myself very well, to be worthy of this trust. This was the beginning, out of which so very much for myself and for my inner self has developed.

I, the Protestant, was the organ player in a Catholic church! The first thing I got out of this was a certain freedom to move around the prison building. After all, they could not place a watchman next to me at the organ! But I got even more out of it, respect that is, and the kind of consideration I was seeking in regard to certain appearances. The watchman of our "visitation" was a quiet, earnest man,

I liked rather well; when he read in the registration book, that I had been made the Catholic organ player, he astonishedly came into my cell, to ask, whether a mistake might have occurred in the files of my commitment; there I was listed as evangelical-Lutheran. I denied that this was a mistake. At this, he looked at me with big eyes and said: “We’ve never had this before! You must be - - - h’m, YOU [a] must be a very talented musician!”

[a] The most important part of this line is rather untranslatable.

In German there is an informal “you” (du) and a formal “you”

(Sie). It makes roughly the same difference as being on a first name basis or on a second name basis. Here, the watchman switches from the informal “du” to the more respectful “Sie”.

The prisoners are of course called “Du”; but from now on, he said “Sie”, and others followed his lead. This was a seemingly small, but nevertheless very valuable step ahead, because from this, many other things ensued. Soon, to my pleasant surprise, it turned out that my watchman was the conductor of the brass band. I told him about my musical occupation in Zwickau. Then, he swiftly brought me sheet music, to put me to the test. I passed this test as well, and from now on everything was so arranged that I was not kept from working towards my own goals in my spare time. This watchman has been a dear, fatherly friend to me, and we kept in contact in a kind, respectful manner for a long time, once he had retired and moved to Dresden.

The name of the Catholic Bible teacher was Kochta. He was just a teacher, without any academic background, but a man of honour in every respect, humane as there is rarely one to be found, and thus rich in experience as an educator and in a psychological regard, that his opinion was much more valuable to me than entire stacks of learned books. He never talked about the peculiarities of the denominations with me. He regarded me as a Protestant and did not make the slightest attempt to influence my religious beliefs. And as he acted towards me, so I acted towards him. I never posed a question concerning Catholicism to

him. Whatever I had to know on this matter, I already knew or was able to find out in other ways.

The beautiful relationship, which by and by formed between us, not allowing any obstructive differences to sneak into this purely human benevolence, was sacred to me. He served in church, I served at the organ, but otherwise religion remained entirely untouched between us and could thus have its effect just the more directly and purely upon me. It was this, his very silence, which was so eloquent, because it allowed his actions to speak, and these were the actions of a nobly spirited person, who might just work his effect on a small circle of people, but who knows how to treat even small things in a great manner.

I had never played Catholic hymns before; now I got to know them.

What pieces of music, especially on the organ, did I get my hands on! I had thought, I would understand music. What a fool I was!

This simple Bible teacher gave me many a nut which was very hard for me to crack. What music essentially is, I just now began to get a glimpse of, and music is by no means the lowest tool the church uses to perform its work.

The Catholic priest only came to me when a special arrangement in regard to accompanying the hymns on the organ had to be made. He never spoke more than what was absolutely necessary and never about religion at all; but whenever he entered my cell, I always felt as if the sun started to shine on me. Such sunny people are rare, and yet, every minister ought to be such a sunny person, because a layman will just too easily regard and judge the church by the way its priest behave towards him. I am going to skip the differences between the Protestant and the Catholic religious services, but to every reasonable person it will be entirely natural and self-evident that I could not participate and even be an active part in the latter for four years, without being influenced by it. After all, we are no rocks, from which all soft things bounce back! And even such a rock becomes warm, when it is hit by a ray of sunshine! And these religious services actually were rays of sunshine! Still today, I feel an infinite gratitude for this warmth and this kindness, which cared for me and had not a single reproach for me, when everything else was against me. I have been blessing it up until this



day and will bless it for as long as I will live! How poor must those people be inside who maintain that I would be spreading a Catholic ideology! It is entirely impossible that they should know the human soul and the sacred places which it contains. Besides, I have written nothing at all about the Catholic faith, but entire volumes about Mohammedanism. Thus, the allegation that I would spread the Islam might appear much more justified than the one that I would promote Catholicism! Why am I not accused of this? The Madonna has been depicted by hundreds of Protestant painters and was the topic of hundreds of Protestant poets, even of Goethe. Why are those not said to promote Catholicism? I have thanked the Catholic church for the high-minded hospitality, it granted me, the Protestant, for four years, by means of a single Ave Maria, which I wrote for my novel "Winnetou". Is that a reason for accusing me of religious hypocrisy? And to make matters even worse, to suggest that I did it for money! I repeat: How poor must these people be, how infinitely poor! - -

I must conclude that those four years of undisturbed seclusion and focused concentration have allowed me to advance very, very much.

Every book I needed for my studies was available to me. I completed the schedule of my work and then started to carry it out. I wrote manuscripts. As soon as one of them was finished, I sent it home. My parents then acted as middlemen between me and the publishers. I did not write to them directly, because they were not meant to find out, yet, that the author of these tales, they printed, was a prisoner. But one of them nevertheless found out about it, because he visited my parents in person. This was the bookseller of colportage [a] literature H.G. Muenchmeyer from Dresden, about whom there is still much more to be said later. He had been a journeyman carpenter, had blown the key-bugle at village dances, and had then become a colporteur. In this capacity, he also came to Hohenstein-Ernstthal and met a maid servant in a neighbouring village, whom he married. This tied him to this area. He got to know its people and also found out about me. The crazy things he was told here he regarded as extraordinarily well suited for his colportage. He came to see my father and sought his acquaintance. Thus, my manuscripts got into his hands. He read them. Some of it was beyond his comprehension. But other parts of it he liked so much, that it, as put it, delighted him. He asked for the permission to print it and got it. He wanted to pay right away and placed the money on the table. But father did not take it. He pushed it back and told him to give it to me in person,

after my release.

Muenchmeyer was very pleased to agree with this. He assured my father that I was the man he needed; he would come to see me after my return home and discuss all the details with me.

[a] colportage (French): novels published as a series of booklets and sold to subscribers by door-to-door salesmen (colporteurs).

I am telling this and just stating it for a fact for now. For many upcoming events, it is of the utmost importance to know that Muenchmeyer did not only precisely know about my past, the truth of it, but had also heard all the lies which had been added to it.

As far as the condition of my soul was concerned, there was quiet, perfect quiet. In the first four weeks of the previous four years, there had still been occasions when the dark characters had tormented me internally and had forced me to listen to what they were shouting at me; but, by and by, this had ceased, and finally it had quieted down, without ever stirring again. When I thought about this, without being sidetracked by psychology, I came to understand that those spectres could only influence me for as long as I was caught in the views which they represented. But once those were overcome, the frightful visions would have to fade.

And this seemed to be the right thing; the Bible teacher was of the same opinion. I had not told him about my internal struggle, as I generally never confide in another person concerning purely personal and family matters. But yet, occasionally, a word was dropped, which was not meant to give any indication, but nevertheless did. He started to notice something. At one time in the course of a conversation, I got to talk about my dark characters and their tormenting voices; but I pretended to talk about someone else, not myself. This made him smile. He knew just too well whom I was referring to. The next day, he brought me a little book, the title of which read: "The so-called split of a person's interior, a representation of the split in mankind in general." I read it. What

pleasure this was! How much did it clarify matters for me! Now, I knew all of a sudden what was wrong with me! Now, let them return, these voices; I had no cause to fear them any more! Later, when he came to get his book back, I thanked him, according to the joy I felt about it. So, he asked me:

“Isn’t it so, it was yourself you were talking about?”

“Yes”, I answered.

“Did you understand everything?”

“No, not yet.”

“What about this here?”

He opened a page, where it read: “He who suffers of these severe afflictions, shall keep clear of the place where he was born. He shall never live there for a longer time. And most of all, if he should ever get married, he should by no means get his wife from this place!”

“No, I don’t understand this yet”, I admitted.

“Nor do I”, he conceded. “But think about it!”

This thinking, he had advised me to do, brought me no results.

This was a purely psychological question. In this, experience is the only knowing teacher, and I had to make this experience, before I understood; unfortunately, unfortunately! - - -

## VI. Working for the Colportage

I had suffered through it. I returned home. It was a stormy day in spring, it was raining and snowing. Father came towards me.

This time, it also did not cross his mind to give my any reproach.

He had read my manuscripts, and he almost knew my letters by heart. He knew now that he had nothing to fear any more concerning my future. He also used this opportunity to talk about Muenchmeyer and about the fact that he wanted to come to see me.

“Nothing will come out of it”, I said. “This man wants trashy novels, exciting love-stories, nothing else. I won’t write this kind of stuff. He’d probably think that I’d be so dishonourable, to piece together a colportage novel out of the gibberish the people have said about me, which would surely earn him a lot of money, but be my destruction. There, he’s mistaken. I have entirely different purposes and goals!”

Father agreed with me. When he had reached the hill before the town and saw it lying before us, he pointed at the next village, at a single, newly build house at a distance from the others and asked me:

“Do you know this over there?”

“Isn’t this the place where that fire had been?”

“Yes. A few days after you were gone, they found out who had started it. The perpetrator was very swiftly sentenced. He got to prison even before you did. Mother will tell you about it.”

“Oh no! I don’t want to know anything, nothing at all. Ask her to keep silent about this!”

As early as the very same night, I found out that the local police sergeant had been boasting in the public bar, how harshly he would receive and supervise me for the next two years; he would not let me out of his sight for a single day! He came as soon as the next morning and took on such a haughty posture, that really no person being treated in such a manner could be blamed if he would be turned back to life of crime by this. He asserted that he was my superior for two years, with whom I had to report daily. Then, he pulled a book with the relevant articles of the law out of his pocket, to lecture me on my duties. I did not say a word, but opened the door and motioned him to leave. When he hesitated to comply, I left. I went to the mayor and put an end to this matter. I demanded a passport to travel abroad, and when I was informed that this could not be done as easy as this, I went on my way as early as the next day without any passport.

On the train, I sat in an otherwise empty compartment. I went across the border. Then, suddenly, raging mad voices started to scream loudly inside of me, shouting and roaring like in a village inn, where the farm-hands are beating each others up with the legs of the chairs. There were hundreds of characters and hundreds of voices, who made this sound. I past times, it would have horrified me; but today I kept cool. These reminiscences of the morasses, who did not want to set me free, had lost their power over me. I did not react to them, and thus, they were to turn quiet one after another all by themselves.

Where this journey took me and what happened on it, shall be reported in the second volume. In the meantime, Muenchmeyer came to ask for me. I was already gone. So, he paid the royalties and went back home without having achieved anything further.

About three quarters of a year later, he appeared again, and not alone, but with his brother. This time, he found me at home, because I had returned to write my “Geographical Sermons” and to have them printed. His brother had been a tailor and had after that also become a colporteur. The business had been running well up to that time, even extraordinarily well; but now it was in danger of collapsing all of a sudden. They needed someone to save them, and this was supposed to be me, me out of all persons! This was incomprehensible to me, because I have had never anything to do with Muenchmeyer before and also did not want to have anything to do with him and neither knew him nor the situation he was in.

He explained it to me. He was a cleverly calculating, very eloquent man, and his brother assisted him in such an excellent manner that I did not simply tell them to leave, but allowed them to state their case. But after they had done this, I was - - - in their web, though I had never thought it possible before that I could ever engage in any kind of business with the “colportage”.

Muenchmeyer had worked his way up and now owned a not too small printing-office with a large composing room, stereotype printing, *etc.* But what he published was indeed the lowest form of colportage. He talked about a so-called “Black Book” with lots of stories about criminals, about a so-called “Venustempel” <Temple of Venus>, which would be a real goldmine, and about a few other productions of the same kind. But for today, he was concerned with a weekly magazine, which he published under the title “Der Beobachter an der Elbe” <The Observer by the River Elbe>. Founder and editor of this magazine was an author from Berlin by the name of Otto Freytag, a very skilful, hard working, but in business matters extremely dangerous person. This man had turned against him, had suddenly run out of the office, had taken all manuscripts with him, and now wanted to publish a magazine very similar to the “Observer by the River Elbe”, to destroy him. “If I don’t get another editor right away, who is better than that person and can take him on, I’m lost!” Muenchmeyer

concluded his report.

“But why do you come to me out of all persons?” I inquired. “I’m neither an editor, nor have I proven my abilities in any other manner!”

“Let me worry about this! I’ve heard much about you, and, most of all, I’ve read your manuscripts. I know about these things.

You’re the one I need!”

“But I’m planning entirely different things, and no one will persuade me to work for the colportage!”

“Because you don’t know it. Good things can just as well be achieved by it. What are your plans anyway?”

I explained my plans to him. This kindled his enthusiasm; he became passionate for them. He was one of these people, who enjoy talking ravingly about the higher matters, but make their living of the low things.

“That’s really excellent, perfectly excellent!” he exclaimed.

“And you can achieve all of this with me, the best and fastest way is with me!”

“Why?”

“You’ll have this stuff printed by me, and you’ll destroy this Freytag and his new magazine with this!”

“This would really make things easier. But what if I don’t like your ‘Observer by the River Elbe’? After all, I don’t know it.”

“So, we’ll discontinue it, and you’ll found a new magazine in its place!”

“What kind of a magazine?”

“Whatever you please, as you see fit for your purposes!”

I confess that by this promise he had already won me over more than half of the way. In respect to my plans, this sounded almost like a gift from heaven! He added even further promises, by means of which he made it easy for me to agree to his wishes. In addition, there were my own considerations. Quite unexpectedly, I was hereby offered this most outstanding opportunity to get acquainted with printing, typesetting, stereotyping, and everything else which was a part of this, in the most comfortable manner. For me as an author, this was a very valuable experience, and such an offer would probably never come to me again. The salary, Muenchmeyer could afford to pay me, was not so very much, but I was earning enough in royalties on the side that I did not really need it at all. And I was not tied to him at all. He offered me the right to quit quarterannually. Thus, I could have left after every three month, if I should not like it.

“Give it a try! Say yes!” he urged me, counting one month’s salary onto the table.



“When would I have to start?” I asked.

“The day after tomorrow or sooner. It’s urgent. This Freytag mustn’t get the jump on us.”

“But you do know that I’ve been to prison!”

“I know everything. But this doesn’t matter.”

“And I’m even under police supervision!”

“I didn’t know that; but that doesn’t matter either. You’re the one I’d like to have most of all for this job, not in spite, but because of this! Let’s shake hands on it!”

This sounded perfectly moving. He stretched out his hand to me; father and mother nodded to me, asking me to do it; so, I shook hands with him; I was - - - an editor.

When I came to Dresden, I took a furnished room at first, but very soon afterwards, Muenchmeyer supplied me with several rooms as the editor’s apartment, and I bought the furniture for it. The publishing company struck me as immensely ugly. The “Black Book”

was downright revoltingly criminal. The “Temple of Venus” turned out to be an abominable project, aiming at the lowest pleasures of the senses, with ribald descriptions and horribly nude, exciting illustrations. It was supplemented with remedies for sexually transmitted diseases, with which such large amounts of money were earned, that it seemed almost unbelievable to me. These shameless booklets and pictures were lying around all over the place. The workers, both male and female, took them home. Muenchmeyer’s four daughters, still schoolgirls and children at this time, read them and played with them, and when I warned Mrs. Muenchmeyer of the consequences, she answered: “What are you thinking! This is our best book! It earns us a lot of money!” I was resolved that this would either have to change or I would leave again without a formal resignation. As far as the “Observer by the River Elbe”

was concerned, the editor of which I had become, I saw right away at the first glance that it would have to disappear. Muenchmeyer was reasonable enough to admit this. We discontinued the magazine, and I founded three others in its place, these were two decent, entertaining magazines, which were entitled “Deutsches Familienblatt” <German Family Paper> and “Feierstunden” <Hours of Celebration>, and a technical as well as entertaining magazine for miners, smelters, and iron-workers, which I gave the title “Schacht und Huette” <Pit and Foundry>. These three magazines were designed to satisfy mainly the spiritual needs of their readers and to bring sunshine into their houses and hearts.

Concerning “Schacht und Huette”, I travelled through Germany and Austria to get the large companies *e.g.* Hartmann, Krupp, Borsig, *etc.* interested in it, and since there was a need for such a magazine at that time, I was so successful that even I myself was astonished at it. The circulation of our magazines increased so much that Muenchmeyer gave me a piano for Christmas. His competitor Freytag tried his best, had some success in the beginning, but had to discontinue his magazine after just a short time.

It was in this time of development, that Muenchmeyer was sued by authorities from out of town for the publication of the “Temple of Venus”. The author of this shameful and trashy piece of literature had been that very same Otto Freytag, who had cut off his affiliation with Muenchmeyer only because the latter would not allow him to share in the profits this publication was yielding.

The book contained a lustfully written segment on “prostitution”, which was practically asking for a complaint with the police.

Muenchmeyer had been tipped off by some party, I do not know by whom, that a search and seizure on account of the “Temple of Venus” would take place. At once, everyone started to be feverishly busy to prevent the losses which this might cause.

Everyone who could be trusted had to help; but I was not told a single word; they were ashamed. Thousands of printed copies were lying around. Entire stacks of this books, reaching up to ceiling, were hidden behind other works of literature. The lift was filled with them. Every concealed place was used. A large amount of the endangered books were brought to their private apartments and were even hidden under their children’s beds. This happened so quickly and was such an success that the police, once they arrived, hardly found anything but a small remainder, and for a long time to come, the Muenchmeyers prided themselves on the trick they had played on the authorities of Dresden, who were otherwise not so easily outsmarted. I did not find out about this until later, much later, and drew my consequences. I would not stay here any longer. I wanted to get out of the abyss, but not back down!

I may very well say, that I have been working hard at this time and have honestly tried my best, to turn Muenchmeyer’s colportage into a decent publishing house. Muenchmeyer sought my friendship, so that we were on the same terms as brothers. I was very much in favour of this, as long as he did what I thought was right. In the very first editions of the tree magazines I had founded, I started to carry out my literary plans. I have already said that, in this respect, I wanted to focus on the inhabitants of two parts of the globe, these were the American Indians and the Islamic peoples. I did this now here. I designated the “German Family Paper” for the Indians and the “Hours of Celebration” for the orient. In the first magazine, I instantly started with “Winnetou”, but called him, according to a different Indian dialect, In-nu-woh for the time being. I was convinced that these two magazines would survive, and I deluded myself in thinking that I could remain their editor for quite a number of years. This would have given me enough space and time for what I intended.

Quite naturally, I also wrote for other companies, which I think I do not need to

name, but I had no intention to stay with them.

Unfortunately, my good, long term plans were very suddenly confronted with an unexpected obstacle, which was originally not at all meant to be an obstacle; it was rather supposed to be a recognition of my achievements, a support. What happened was that, in order to tie me to the company, the suggestion was made that I should marry the sister of Mrs. Muenchmeyer. In order to achieve this, my father was invited to Dresden. For two weeks, he was allowed to live as a guest with the Muenchmeyers and was offered the friendship [a] of the father of Mrs. Muenchmeyer.

This had the very opposite effect. I said “no” and quit, for now it was just too plain that I could not stay, especially since it was at about this time that I found out the details of that trick they had played on the police of Dresden. Now, my plans had to be kept quiet for the time being, but I did not give them up. After the three months had past, I moved away from the Muenchmeyers, but I stayed in Dresden. The separation from the colportage was not hard on me in the least. I was free again, wrote a few necessary manuscripts, and then went on a journey. Passing through my home town, I was there summoned to the local Inferior Court as a witness and was told that Freytag, the author, and Muenchmeyer, the publisher of the “Temple of Venus”, had been recently punished for this shameful publication. This had been kept from me. How glad was I, not to have married into the circle of this “Temple of Venus”!

[a] Bruederschaft: Literally “brotherhood”, a more or less formal occasion, where two men allow one another to call each other by their first names and the informal “du” instead of the formal “Sie”. It usually involves some consumption of beer.

After my return home from the journey, I had mentioned before, I had cause to call on my sister, who was married to a man from Hohenstein. I lived with her for a few days, and there, I made the acquaintance of a girl, who made a very singular impression on me. In the beginning of this book, I have said that I have the strange peculiarity to see a person standing before me more as a soul than as a body. Whether this is a blessing or a shortcoming, I cannot decide; but due to

this idiosyncrasy of mine, it happens rather frequently that I regard an ugly person as pretty and a pretty person as ugly. To me, the most interesting beings are those in whom the form of their souls appears as a mystery to me, whose spiritual shape I cannot make out, or whose shadings I cannot grasp. Such persons attract me, even when they appear repulsive; I cannot help it. And about the girl, I am talking about here, there was also something else, something rather peculiar. It was like this: When I was, at the age of fourteen, a proseminarist in Waldenburg, one day in November, I went from there to Ernstthal to see my parents and to get my laundry. On the way back, I came across the market square of Hohenstein.

There, they were singing. The students' choir stood in front of a house. There was a corpse, which was to be buried. I knew the house. Downstairs lived a man selling flour and upstairs lived a gentleman, who had moved here from out of town and was sometimes referred to as a barber, then as an army-surgeon, physician, or doctor. He did not shave just anybody, and it was well known that he could do even much more than this. His name was Pollmer. He had a daughter, who was considered to be the most beautiful girl of both towns; I knew this. She was now to be buried.

Therefore, I stopped. Two women, who also wanted to listen and watch, came and stood behind me. A third woman joined them, who was from a village, she asked whose funeral this would be.

“Pollmer's daughter”, answered one of the first two women.

“Oh?! The dentist's? Whatever did she die of?”

“Of her own child. It would be better if the child was dead, but she was still alive. There can never be a blessing on such a child, the mother has died for; that'll bring nothing but mischief for everyone.”

“What’s the father’s profession?”

“Him? But it has no father!”

“Good God! This as well? If that’s so, thing would surely be better, if the nickel [a] could be buried right alongside with the mother!”

[a] The word “Nickel” used to have many different meanings of questionable origin in the German language. Nowadays, the word is only used for the chemical element. One definite source of this word is a short form of the name Nicholas (in German: Nikolaus). According to one dictionary, it also used to mean an imp or small, obstinate person. Another dictionary lists these meanings: “(1) short for Nikolaus, (2) a no-good bum, (3) a stubborn malcontent, (4) a small, old, evil spirit, who lives under water, (5) the metal.” A dictionary from 1808

distinguishes these meanings: “(1) short for Nikolaus, (2) an ore, (3) a hollow top (a toy which is spun around), also a hit or push in certain combinations with other words, (4) a small horse and possibly, in older times, a small thing in general, (5) an indecent woman.”

Now, the singing stopped. The coffin was brought out. The funeral procession formed. Upstairs, in the open window of the living-room, a woman appeared, carrying something in her arms.

This was the child, the “nickel”, who had killed her own mother and meant nothing but mischief for everyone! I understood nothing of all this. What does a fourteen year old boy know of the prejudice of this kind of people! But when the funeral procession had passed me by, and I continued on my way, I took something with me, which later often occupied my mind; this was the question why one had to be suspicious of a child who has no father and who was to blame for her mother’s death. On account of my youth and inexperience, I believed in

what the women were saying, and felt some kind of a horror, whenever I thought of this burial and this unfortunate “nickel”. Later, whenever I came across the market square of Hohenstein, I quite involuntarily looked up to that certain window in the upper apartment of the flour-merchant’s house. After several years had passed, I once saw the head of a child, of a girl, looking out. I stopped for a moment to have a look at the face. It was unexpressive and had neither anything pleasant nor anything terrifying about it. Later, I once came across a tall man of strong build in the street, leading an about twelve year old girl by the hand. This was the old Pollmer with his “nickel”. The old man looked very grim, but the child was very chipper and friendly; she had nothing at all about her from which one could have told “that her mother had died of her”.

Then, I had seen her a few more times, in the beginning of the second half of her teens, pale, grown tall, extremely thin, entirely uninteresting, a person, perfectly indifferent to me. I never would have thought that this girl could ever play even the most irrelevant role in my life. And now that I lived at my sister’s place, upon a visit with one of her friends, several young girls were introduced to me, among which there was also a “Miss Pollmer”. This was the “nickel”; but she looked so different than before. She sat so quietly and modestly at the table, was very busy crocheting, and hardly said a word. I liked that. This face blushed easily. She had a quite peculiar, mysterious way of opening her eyes. And whenever a word came over her lips, it sounded cautiously, calculated, and not at all like with other girls, who just babble out with everything, as it crosses their tongues. I liked this a lot. I was told that her grandfather, Pollmer this is, had read my “Geographical Sermons”

and read them over and over again. I liked this even more. She seemed to me to be so entirely different from her friends.

Looking beyond the forms of the latter, I did not see even a trace of a mind and just a hint of a soul. But behind Miss Pollmer’s facade, there was psychological ground, whether it was a high or a low ground, a desert or a fertile soil, I could not discern, but there was a ground; I saw this clearly, and the wish formed in me to get to know this ground. That she was not from a prosperous or even respected family, could not hold me back, after all, I myself was also nothing but the poor son of a weaver and, basically, even much less than this.

The next day, her grandfather came to see me. She had told him about me and had kindled the wish in him, to get to know me in person as well, after having read my “sermons”. He seemed to be satisfied by me, for he asked me to return the visit. I did so.

A steady contact developed between us, which, after I had ended my visit and had gone back to Dresden, changed from a personal to written one. But Pollmer did not like to write. The letters I received were by his granddaughter’s hand. Who would have ever thought that I would start corresponding with the “nickel”, who “brought nothing but mischief”!

Her letters made an extraordinarily good impression. There, she wrote about my “beautiful, highly important profession”, about my “glorious tasks”, about my “noble goals and ideals”. She quoted passages from my “Geographical Sermons” and extended them with her own thoughts, which astonished me by being right on the mark.

What a natural gift for being an author’s wife! Though I occasionally had the impression that only a male author, and a very educated one at that, could write such letters, I was not able to consider her capable of such a deception. My sister wrote me, too. She was overflowing with praise for “Miss Pollmer” and invited me to visit her again for the Christmas holidays. I did so. I forgot that Christmastime in particular had rarely been a friend of mine, and that I had been warned against the place of my birth. This Christmas decided my fate, though I did not get engaged right away. After all, I had time. This time, I mostly spent travelling, until I called on my home again for Whitsuntide, to continue studying the soul of the “nickel” again, who was now supposed to become “my nickel”. But this continuation was not to be, but rather a decision had to be made right away, the likes of which is otherwise only found on stage. This came about like this: When Pollmer found out that I had returned, he visited me and invited me for lunch at his place. He had been a widower for a long time, and his family only consisted of him and his granddaughter. I knew that he only talked most favourably about me wherever he went and that my prior convictions did not keep him at all from regarding me as a good, trustworthy person. But I also knew that he considered his grandchild to be the most beautiful and precious being in the entire area, and that he had perfectly fairy-tale-like thoughts in respect to whom she should marry. He was on the opinion that such radiant



beauties were the greatest wealth of their family and might only be married to a husband who was as rich and noble as possible. Quite naturally, this opinion of his could not have failed to influence his granddaughter; I noticed this very well; and perhaps, it was high time to get her away from this influence. Therefore, when he asked me to have this day's lunch as his place, I answered: "I'd very much like to come, but only under the condition that I may not only come for your, but also for your daughter's sake."

He listened up in surprise.

"For Emma's sake?" he asked.

"Yes."

"What do you mean by this? Do you have any designs on her? Do you perhaps even want to marry her?"

"Yes, indeed."

"Heavens! This is the first time I hear of this! But, I'd think, that this is only your intention! Whatever does she say about all this?"

"She agrees with me."

At this, he sprang up from his chair, became dark red all over his face, and

exclaimed:

“I won’t have it, no way, no way! My daughter has not been born and has not been brought up to toil her way through life with a poor devil! She can get other men. I won’t have her marrying an author, who, if all turns out well, only lives by his fame and otherwise starves!”

“Might it be that you are also considering my prior convictions in this?” I asked.  
“This, I would accept!”

“Nonsense! I don’t care about that. Hundreds of thousands are walking about in freedom, who ought to be in prison! No, that’s not it. I have entirely different reasons. You won’t get my daughter!”

He shouted these words very loudly.

“Oho!” I answered.

“Oho? There is no oho! I’m telling you again, you won’t get my daughter!”

He pounded his walking stick on the floor with every one of these words, to increase their effect. I was very tempted to place my hand on his shoulder and to tell him laughingly: “Well, so keep her!” But my father’s legacy within me rebelled against this, the tough, unreflected rage, which never does the right thing. I now also became enraged:

“If you won’t give her to me, then I’ll take her!”

“Just try it!”

“I won’t just try it, but I will do it, actually do it!”

Then, he laughed.

“You won’t dare to come to my place. From now on, any kinds of visits on your part are not welcome any more!”

“This goes without saying. But I predict: The time will come, when you’ll come to me in person and beg me to visit you. But for now, farewell!”

“Me, begging you? Never, never, no way!”

He left. But I wrote three lines and sent them to his daughter.

They read: “Choose between me and your grandfather; if you choose him, stay; if you choose me, come to Dresden right away!”

Then I left town. She chose me; she came. She left the man who had brought her up and whose only treasure she was. This flattered me. I felt as if I had been the winner. I put her up with a minister’s widow, who had two grown-up, highly educated daughters. By the contact with these ladies, she was enabled to easily obtain everything she did not possess yet. This gave her the opportunity, to manage a household by herself. I also worked with much, even very much

success. I became well known and earned very decent royalties. I had started my “traveller’s tales”, which were also published right away in Paris and Tours, translated into French. The word of this got around; this even impressed the “old Pollmer”. He was told by experts, that I was about to become a prosperous, perhaps even a rich man. So he wrote to his daughter. He forgave her for leaving him for my sake, and asked her to come to Hohenstein, to visit him, and to bring me along. She fulfilled his wish, and I accompanied her.

But I did not come to see him, but rather went to Ernstthal to my parents. He sent for me; but I answered, I knew very well what I had predicted to him. If he wanted to have me at his place, he would have to come in person, to invite me. And he came!

Again, I felt as if I had been the winner. How foolish was I! It was not me who had won here, but only the calculated thought that I was likely to obtain a fortune, and for me, there even was the danger that it was not just the grandfather who was thus calculating. Aside from this, he asked her to stay with him in Hohenstein, until we would get married. I had no objections and gave up my lodgings in Dresden, to live with my parents in Ernstthal. This was a time of rather strange internal and external developments for me. I wrote and travelled. Returning from one of these travels, I was told, as soon as I had stepped off the train, that the night before the “old Pollmer” had died; he had suffered a stroke. I rushed to his apartment. I had been told too much. He was not dead; he was still alive, but he could neither speak nor move. His grandchild sat in the next room, rather materially busy. She had searched for his money and found it. It was not much; I believe it was less than two hundred marks. I pulled her away from this, over to the sick man. He recognised me and wanted to talk, but only achieved an inarticulate babble. His eyes expressed a terrible fear. Then, the physician who treated him came. He had already examined him the first thing early in the morning, did it now again, and informed us that all hope was in vain. After he had left, the dying man’s daughter fell on her knees before me and begged me that I should by no means leave her. I promised this to her and have kept my word. I have even done more than this. I fulfilled her wish to stay in Hohenstein. We rented one floor at the upper market square and could have lived there in infinite happiness, if such happiness had been in our destiny.

At this time, I had already been writing for Pustet in Regensburg for several years, who published my “traveller’s tales” in his magazine “Deutscher Hausschatz”. Pustet is a Catholic publisher, and the “Deutscher Hausschatz” is a Catholic family magazine. But this religious affiliation was most irrelevant to me. The reason why I have remained faithful to this highly decent company was not religion, but merely business. This was because, as early as after my second short story, Councillor of Commerce [a] Pustet had his editor Vinzenz Mueller [b] inform me that he would agree to purchase all of my manuscripts; he wanted me to send them to no other publishing company. And he promised to pay instantly. In case of longer manuscripts, which I was to send him one installment after another, he would very much like to pay for every part individually; as much money as there are pages!

Probably, there will not be too many authors who are made such an offer. I happily agreed. For about twenty years, whenever I mailed a manuscript, the royalties arrived precisely two days later. I do not remember a single time, when it would have come later. And never, there has been even the slightest disagreement concerning the royalties among us. I never demanded more than what we had agreed upon, and when Pustet suddenly doubled it, it was his own, free decision, without me ever having stated any wish in this respect. An author will remain faithful to such a publisher, even without asking them for his faith or religious affiliations.

[a] Kommerzienrat: a title, not connected with any public office, which was awarded to businessmen in recognition of their work by the German government up until 1919.

[b] Venanz Mueller (1831-1906?), not Vinzenz.

But even more valuable to me than this punctuality was the fact that all of my manuscripts were ordered in advance and would surely be accepted and printed. This enabled me to, now finally, carry out my plans concerning my “traveller’s tales”. Now, I could be sure to have the necessary space in a magazine for a long time to come at my disposal. Who would later publish these tales in the form of books, was a question which might just as well remain unanswered for the time

being. There are hostile people who have said that I had only sought contact with this Catholic publisher for the sake of money. This is such an unconscientious and reprehensible lie that I cannot find the words to answer it.

I have done the very opposite of what I am here accused of. I have made sacrifices for the “Deutscher Hausschatz” and its publisher, the extent of which the Pustet family did not even suspect. Before me, I have a letter which Professor Josef Kuerschner, the well known, famous publicist, I used to be a very close friend of, has written to me on October the 3th, 1886. He was writing about the magazine “Vom Fels zum Meere” <From the Mountains to the Sea>, which was published by Spemann in Stuttgart and for which I used to work. The letter reads as follows: “Dear Sir!

“In the meantime, you have once again supplied other companies with material, while you are still keeping me waiting for what you have already promised a long time ago. This is not exactly the right thing to do, and I am asking you urgently to make good on your promise to me, now. I do not want to miss this opportunity to ask you, whether you would not be inclined to start writing a rather thrilling, gripping, and eventful novel. In this case, I would be able to guarantee YOU royalties of up to a thousand marks per sheet of the magazine, if you would write something of the kind.

“Most sincerely

your most devoted

Josef Kuerschner.”

The royalties I received from Pustet were, compared with these thousand marks, so insignificant that I cannot bring myself to naming the amount here. The fact that I nevertheless preferred Pustet is surely more than a sufficient proof that I did not write for the “Hausschatz” to “make more money than I received from others”. My other publishers also payed significantly more than Pustet. I hereby have to state this for a fact, to confront these vicious rumours. I will tell you

about the contents of these tales I wrote for the “Hausschatz” elsewhere. Obeying the logic of the facts, I have have to turn from Pustet back to Muenchmeyer.

The year was 1882, when I reached Dresden with my wife on a recreational trip. I had described Muenchmeyer thus vividly to her, that she could picture him quite correctly, though she had not seen him yet. But she wished very much to get to know him, the man about whom others had told her as well that he was a handsome fellow, a splendid conversationalist, and felt enthusiastically about beautiful women. At this time of the year, he was in the habit of frequenting a certain garden restaurant at nightfall. When I told her about this, she asked me to escort her there. I did so, though I felt reluctant about showing him the one I had preferred over his sister-in-law. I was not mistaken.

He was there. The only guest in the entire garden. His joy to see me gain was sincere; this was plain to see. But might there not also have been reasons relating to his business for this joy?

He had been sitting there so very much slouching and depressed, with his head in both of his hands. But now, he was suddenly happy and alert. He was radiating with pleasure. In his colportage-style, he gave me the most impossible compliments, for having such a beautiful wife, and he congratulated my wife in the same expressions for the good fortune of having a husband who had become famous so quickly. He knew my success, but exaggerated it, to flatter the two of us. He impressed my wife, and she impressed him just the same. He began to talk enthusiastically, and he began to become honest. He told her that she was as beautiful as an angel, and that she was to be his rescuing angel, yes, his rescuing angel whom he needed in this present dire need. She could save him by asking me to write a novel for him. And now he told his story:

After I had left his business, he had not found a suitable editor for the magazines I had founded. He himself had no gift for editing. They very quickly lost in value; the subscribers cancelled; they were discontinued. But this was not all.

Nothing at all seemed to work out for him. One loss followed after another, and now, the situation was thus that he could no longer evade Hamlet’s question of

“to be or not to be”. Just in this very moment, he had pondered the matter by whom or what he could be saved, but in vain. Then, the two of us had come in, like being heaven-sent. And now he knew, that he would be saved, saved by me, by a novel of mine, by the beautiful, young, kind woman of my heart, who would not leave me alone with this matter, until the novel was in his hands. This sly fellow had, by means of this crude praise, completely assured himself of my inexperienced wife’s assistance. He urged me to fulfil his wish, and she joined in. He was clever enough to suggest to me that basically it was only me who was to blame for his present bad situation. Six years ago, everything had been extraordinary well; but when I refused to marry his sister-in-law and left my job as an editor, everything had turned completely into the opposite. To undo this damage, he said, I was morally practically obliged, to give him a hand, now.

As far as this final thought was concerned, I felt very well that there was some truth in it. My willingness to marry the sister of Mrs. Muenchmeyer had, at that time, been taken so much for granted, that they were talking about it everywhere. By rejecting this plan, not just this girl, but the entire family as well, had suffered an almost public humiliation, which, though it was not my fault, moved me to do Muenchmeyer some kind of a favour to repair the damage. Furthermore, there had been no argument between us, but we had parted as friends. So there could be no personal reason, only perhaps one relating to business, to reject his wish.

But concerning business, there also was no compelling reason to refuse. I had time; I just had to take it. The fact that Muenchmeyer published colportage did not compel me to write for him nothing but a trashy colportage-novel. It could be something better, an evolving sequence of traveller’s tales, as I delivered to Pustet and other publishers. If I did so, this would at the same time serve my life’s work as well, and just it had been planned for the Hausschatz-tales, I could, what I wrote for Muenchmeyer, also have published in books later on for my own benefit.

These ideas went through my head, while Muenchmeyer and my wife were trying to persuade me. I finally declared that I might perhaps decide to write the desired novel, but only under the condition that after an appointed time, all right



would revert to me. Absolutely no word was allowed to be changed from my manuscript; but, after all, he would know about this from my previous work, I said. Muenchmeyer stated that he would agree to this, but I should not be too hard on him concerning the royalties. He was in need and could not pay much. Later, if my novel should turn out to be a success, he could balance this out with a “fine gratification”. This sounded not too bad. He asked me not to impose a time, when the novel should revert to me, but rather to agree on a number of subscribers; once this would have been reached, he would have to stop and return my rights to me.

He figured out that with six to seven thousand subscribers, he would break even; everything beyond this was profit. Therefore, I suggested that, in case I should write this novel, Muenchmeyer should be allowed to sell up to twenty thousand subscriptions, not more; then, he would have to pay me a “fine gratification”, and all of the rights to the novel would revert to me. Whether I would then, for appropriate royalties, continue having it published with him or another publisher, was entirely up to me.

Muenchmeyer immediately agreed to this, but did not definitely consent yet; I declared that I wanted to think about the matter thoroughly and give him my decision the next day.

As early as the next morning, Muenchmeyer came to our hotel, to get my decision. I said yes, to equal parts voluntarily and forced. My wife had been keeping at it, until I had given her the promise to fulfil his wish. He got the novel at the desired conditions, which was only up to the twenty thousandth subscriber.

For this, he had to pay 35 marks per issue and a “fine gratification” in the end. We shook hands. Thus, our contract was not in writing, but an oral agreement. He said that we were both honest men and would never cheat one another. It would sound like an insult to him to ask him for a signature. I had two good reasons for agreeing to this. The first one was that, according to the Saxonian law at that time, only a thousand copies were allowed to be printed without a contract; thus, Muenchmeyer would have only defrauded himself, if he had intended to be dishonest; so I thought. And secondly, I could easily and inconspicuously obtain the missing written contract by means of letters. I, quite simply, only had to style my business letters to Muenchmeyer in such a way, that

his answers, in one letter after another, would contain everything we had agreed upon. And so I did, safely keeping all of his answers.

He was very eager that I should start with the novel right away.

I did him this favour and quickly returned to Hohenstein, to start without delay. My wife urged me almost even more than Muenchmeyer himself. He had a personal preference for the meaningless title “Das Waldroeschen” <The little rose of the forest> [a]. I agreed to this as well, but was careful not to make any further kinds of concessions to him. After just a few weeks, there were good news.

The novel “went”. This “went” is a term of the business, which means a not too commonplace success. I received no proof-sheets for correction or revision, and this was just all right with me, because I had no time for this. Copies of the finished booklets were not sent to me, because they would have interrupted my concentration. I was to receive my free copies after the novel was finished in one complete set. I agreed to this. Of course, this gave me no opportunity to compare my original manuscript with the printed text, but I did not worry about this. After all, we had agreed that no word of mine was to be changed, and I was so trusting in those days to think that this was enough.

[a] An English translation was published in 1886 under the title “Rosita” in America.

The success of the “Waldroeschen” did not just seem to turn out well, but even quite extraordinarily. Muenchmeyer wrote in his letters that he was very satisfied. He repeatedly wrote that he considered himself to be saved even now, after such a short time, for he did hope that the novel would continue to attract as many readers as it had up to now. He suggested that we should not stay in Hohenstein, but move to Dresden, since he wanted me to be near him. My wife enthusiastically jumped on the idea and made sure that it was carried out as quickly as possible. By no means, I offered any resistance. Especially since during my time in Hohenstein, I had to think more and more often of the

warning, which was to be read in the Bible teacher's book. In spite of this warning, I had not just settled down at the place of my birth, but had also taken a wife from there. For some time, I had tended towards regarding the contents of this passage of the book as a superstition, but soon afterwards, I regarded it again with the eyes of a psychologist and was finally, by the weight of the facts, forced to realize that a single swimmer can at any rate cross muddy waters easier than when he has to take a second person along who can neither swim nor is willing to swim. Therefore, this move was rather what I had wanted, and yet, as a matter of caution, I did not move to Dresden itself, but rather to Blasewitz, to have more freedom. Even there, Muenchmeyer called on me right away, and repeated his visits several times a week. A contact developed between him and us, which was quite advantageous in the beginning. I worked so hard that I did almost never permit myself to relax. This novel progressed very rapidly, and its success grew to such an extent that Muenchmeyer asked me to write a second one and possibly even several more. I did not suspect that my decision concerning this wish of his would be a highly important one for me and that a positive answer could become a source of unspeakable misery and unpronounceable torture for me. I only looked at the alleged advantages, but did not see the danger.

This danger developed, as it did once before, out of my literary plans. Muenchmeyer had not forgotten these plans; he still knew them very well. Now, he reminded me of them. Because I had given up my job in his business, I had not been able to carry them out, then. But now, I was no employee, but a free man, who could not be kept from doing as he pleased by anything. And the most important thing was: I did not need to stretch what I wanted to write, as I had to do with Pustet, over many annual sets of a magazine, but I could swiftly write it all, one thing after another, to publish what was now printed in booklets, later, in the form of books. This enticed me. On top of it, there was the constant insistence of my wife, who could very easily silence the minor objections I had to make. In short, I gave my consent to write several novels more and this at the very same conditions as the "Waldroeschen". So, these works also had to revert to me after the twenty thousandth subscriber with all rights included, and then, I was to be paid a "fine gratification". There was just a single change, and this was that I received royalties of fifty marks per booklet for these novels, instead of just thirty-five for the "Waldroeschen".

Due to this agreement, this was the beginning of a time for me, of which I cannot think today without satisfaction, but also not without a feeling of deep shame. I am not asking, whether I am hurting my reputation by being thus honest; it is my duty to say the truth, nothing else. At this time, I worked with an almost feverish zeal. I did not have to spend much effort on looking for topics like other authors; after all, I had made extensive lists of topics for myself, I only had to turn to, to instantly find what I was looking for. And all of them were already completely thought out; I only had to carry them out; I only needed to write. And I did the latter with an eagerness, which did not let me look either left or right, and this in particular, this was the very thing I wanted. I had to realize that there was no other happiness for me in life than only this one, which was derived from my work. Therefore, I worked, I worked so much and with so much pleasure, so much pleasure! This restless zeal enabled me to forget that I had been mistaken concerning my life's bliss and was now leading an even much, much lonelier life than ever before.

This deep, internal loneliness urged me to be restlessly busy, to fill the dreary desolation, and it unfortunately made me indifferent in respect to the necessity of having to be cautious in matters of business. In Muenchmeyer's company, so many things happened which might have caused me to be vigilant, so that I had more than a sufficient reason to ensure as much as possible the future accessibility and integrity of everything I wrote for him.

Not thinking of this was a mistake, which I can excuse, but cannot forgive myself for, even up to this day.

Muenchmeyer had become a regular caller of ours. In Blasewitz, he had rented some kind of a bachelor's apartment, to be able to spend his Saturdays and Sundays more comfortably with us. He also came in the evenings of other days, and almost always, he brought his brother along and very often other persons as well. Though he wished that, by no means, I should allow this to disturb me in my work, he could not keep me from being the master of my apartment, and then, when this had become impossible to me, I did not hesitate to give the apartment up and to move away from Blasewitz, to the city. My new apartment was in one of the most quiet and most remote streets, and my new landlord, a

very forceful owner of a castle and a manorial estate, did not permit any disturbing noise and generally nothing he deemed unnecessary in his house.

This was the very thing I had been looking for. There, I found the internal and external quiet and concentration I needed.

Muenchmeyer came a few more time, than he stayed away. Instead, I do not know why, we received invitations from Mrs. Muenchmeyer, to accompany her on her Sunday walks through the forest and the heath. She had been advised to take these walks by a physician, who had prescribed deep breaths of fresh air for her. Whether I liked it or not, I had to take part in them, because this was my wife's wish, whose reasons I unfortunately was unable to appreciate. She did not get used to the seclusiveness of our present apartment; she got into an argument with the landlord. I had to terminate the lease. We moved out, to a noisy apartment of the American quarter, which was right above a public bar, so that I could not work. Then, she became ill. The physician advised her to take very early walks in the "Large Garden", the world-famous park of Dresden. Such prescriptions of a physician have to be obeyed. I had no reason to prevent these walks, which started between four and five o'clock in the morning and lasted for about three hours. I did not know that Mrs. Muenchmeyer had also been ill and that she, too, had been instructed by her physician to go on early morning walks in the "Large Garden".

Only after a long, very long time, I found out what had happened during those walks. I had not just lost touch with my wife's soul, but I had also lost her in business matters. Every day, early in the morning, the two ladies sat together in a cafe of the "Large Garden" and practised a kind of housewife's business politics, the effects of which I did not get to feel until much later. I put an end to it and moved away from Dresden, to Koetzschenbroda, the outermost point of the periphery of Dresden's suburbs.

Even before this, I had managed to finish my last novel for Muenchmeyer. I had written five of them for him, in a time of only four years. In regard to the later allegations in court that I had not been working hard for Muenchmeyer, but had been lazy, just name me an author who has coped with a larger workload and has, at the same time, been working for other publishers as well.

With this, let me put an end to my “time at the colportage” for today. - - -

## VII. My Literary Work

When I am talking about my literary work here, I am referring to those books the critics have been or still are devoting their attention to. Those books the critics have ignored, no matter whether it happened intentionally or unintentionally, may also be skipped here. Among these are my humorous short stories, my village-tales from the Ore Mountains, and a few other things which still lie hidden in the newspapers, without being collected in books. I could also list my “Thoughts of Heaven” among those, since no critic seems to dare to touch them since Mr. Hermann Cardauns happened to cause such a wondrous embarrassment for himself by them. As we all know, he wrote: “But as a lyrical poet, we have to say `no’ to him”, though the entire collection does not contain a single lyrical poem! I also do not have to discuss my so-called “Union or Spemann”-volumes [a] here, because they have not been attacked anywhere, though I am only attacked in my capacity as an author for young people, and these are the only things I have written for the young generation. So, I will only deal with the “traveller’s tales”, published by Fehsenfeld, and the “trashy novels”, which had been published by Muenchmeyer; the latter I will discuss in the next chapter.

[a] This refers to a series of stories which were first published in a magazine for boys, published by Wilhelm Spemann, and were later collected in several books, which were published by a company called “Union Deutsche Verlagsgesellschaft”.

As mentioned before, my “traveller’s tales” have to rise among the Arabs from the desert up to the Jebel Marah Durimeh and among the American Indians from the jungle and the prairie up to the Mount Winnetou. On this path, the reader shall develop from a low anima-person up to the realization of what it means to be a nobly spirited person. At the same time, he shall experience how the anima

transforms on this path into a soul and a mind. Therefore, these tales start in the first volume in the “desert”. In the desert, *i.e.* in the nothingness, in complete ignorance about everything which concerns the anima, the soul, and the mind.

Stepping out into the desert and opening his eyes, the first thing my Kara Ben Nemsi, the first person narrator, the “self”, mankind’s great question, gets to see is a strange, little fellow, who is riding towards him on a large horse, has invented a long, famous name for himself, and even maintains that he was a Hadji, though he finally has to admit that he has never been to one of the holy cities of Islam, where the honourable title of a Hadji is obtained. You see, that I am dressing up a genuinely German, and therefore domestic, psychological riddle into a foreign, oriental garment, to make it more interesting and to be able to solve it in a more understandable manner. This is what I mean when I maintain that all of these traveller’s tales have to be interpreted as parables, *i.e.* figuratively or symbolically. There is no mysticism or anything similar involved. My symbols are so clear, so transparent, that nothing mystical can hide behind them at all.

This Hadji, who calls himself Hadji Halef Omar and adds even his father and grandfathers’ names with the title Hadji to his own, symbolises the human anima, which pretends to be the soul or even the mind, without even knowing what a soul or a mind really is.

This is a daily occurrence among us, not just in ordinary life, but also among learned people, but there such a blindness towards this mistake that I have to resort to Arabian characters and Arabian conditions to let the blind eyes see. Therefore, I send this Halef to Mecca in one of the very first chapters, which transforms his lie into the truth, because he is now really a Hadji, and then, immediately afterwards, I let him get acquainted with his “soul” - - - Hannah [a], his wife!

[a] This is a misspelling in the original text. The character is actually called Hanneh.

I hope that this example, which I take from my very first volume, says clearly what I want and how my books have to be read, to get to know their real contents. Let me follow it up with a second example: Kara Ben Nemsi is with the Persian tribe of the Jamikun.

This tribe is to be destroyed by the people of the Sillan. Then, the ustad, the leader of the Jamikun, sends a messenger to the shah, to ask him for help. This messenger has not even reached the shah yet, when he meets with the shah's hosts, who are telling him that they have been sent by the shah to help the Jamikun.

Thus, the shah had granted the ustad's request, even before it has reached him. But the shah represents God, and thus, I interpret by this tale the Christian teaching on prayer in Matthew 6:8: "Your father knows what you require, before you ask him!"

Furthermore, the ustad is nobody else but Karl May, and the people of Jamikun are his readers, which are to be destroyed by the Sillan. So, I am telling purely German events in a Persian disguise and render them by these means understandable for friends and enemies alike. Is this not a parable? Not symbolic? It certainly is! And could it be mystic? Not in the very least! It is so obviously a parable and so little mystic that, to be honest, everybody who would deny the former and suppose the latter would seem to me like a person who would deserve a name which I do not want to mention. Whoever does not go about reading my books with unconditionally hostile intentions and is honestly willing will, without much of an effort, find that their contents consist of almost nothing but parables. And to him who has once reached this realization, the numerous fables of heaven will quite surely not remain unnoticed, which are strewn all over these parables and which have to form the actual, deepest contents of my traveller's tales. These fables are also the material out of which I will have to develop my real life-work in the end of my final days.

After all, even my very first character, Hadji Halef Omar, is already a fable, the fable of the lost human soul, which can never be found again, unless it finds itself. And this Hadji is my own anima; yes, he is the anima of Karl May! By describing all the flaws of this Hadji, I disclose my own faults, and thereby, I make a confession the likes of which was probably never made before thus



comprehensively and thus honestly by any author. I may very well maintain that I do not deserve in the least certain allegations which are being made by my opponents. If, for a change, these opponents would dare to talk thus openly about themselves as I talk about myself, then this so-called KarlMay-problem would have reached that state a long time ago, which it eventually has to reach, whether they like it or not.

For this KarlMay-problem is also a parable. It is nothing else but that great, general problem of mankind, which countless millions have already endeavoured to solve, without achieving any tangible result. Just the same, they have already, for several decades, endeavoured to work on me, without producing more than this pathetic caricature as which I live in the brains and the writings of those who feel called upon to solve problems, but always do this just there where there are none.

Let me furthermore name the fable of “Marah Durimeh”, the soul of mankind, the fable of “Shakara”, that noble soul of a woman, sent by God, this woman whom I have described with the features of my present wife. And then there are the fables of the “redeemed devil”, the “immured God”, the “petrified prayer”, the “calcified souls”, the “Beit-Ullah’s columns of roses”, the “jump into the past”, the “jemma of the living and the dead”, the “battle at the Jebel Allah”, the “Lake Mahalama”, the “mountain of the royal tombs”, the “mir of Jinnistan”, the “mir of Ardistan”, the “city of the deceased”, the “Jebel Muchallis”, the “watershed of El Hadd”, and many, many more. Considering these mentally and spiritually so significant, yes even hard, contents of my novels, it would be incomprehensible how they could be described as “literature for young people” and I as an “author for young people”, if we would not know that all who commit this mistake have either not understood them or have not read them at all.

Even “Winnetou”, which seems to be so easy to read, requires, when it approaches its end in the fourth volume, a reflection and understanding, which would surely be asking too much from a seventh-grader or a teenaged girl! When some people nevertheless continue using these expressions “literature for young people” and “author for young people”, I have to describe this as an intentional misrepresentation, which is beneath every decent and serious critic.

But once the admission is made, honestly and according to the truth, that my “traveller’s tales” have not been written for the young generation, the foundation of the nowadays commonplace supposition that they were harmful has been removed. Let them only be read by those to whom they are not harmful; I would not force anybody else to do so! What is the reason and purpose of all these allegations, I am now confronted with in hundreds of newspapers? As soon as one takes a closer look at these allegations, they lose all of their worth. I used to be praised; now, I am disapproved of. This has become the current fashion and will, like every fashion, turn into its opposite again. But this fashion is not just a fashion, but a scheme! Even if now my books were no longer read by anybody, this could not worry me in the least, for I know that this scheme will be found out very soon, resulting in the appropriate reaction. Moreover, if had fed my readers with nothing but entertainment, I would have to disappear from the scene, never to reappear again, and would be understanding enough, without having to be told so, to submit to this fate. But *duringmy\_”lifeandmy\_efforts”Ihave\_committed\_*

*mistakes,whichwerejust\_too\_manyandjust\_too\_severe,forme\_*

*tobe\_allowedtoperish\_andtodisappear\_forever\_justlikethat.\_*

*Ihavetoundothedamage!\_* Whatever a mortal has sinned, he has to repent and atone for, and blessed is he who is granted an opportunity by heaven not to take his guilt with him beyond death, but to pay already for it here. I want to do this; I may do this, and I will do this! Moreover, I boldly state: I have already done this! I have already given to the law of man everything it had a right to demand from me a long time ago; I do not owe it anything any more! And what extends beyond those articles of the law created by man, I will settle by dedicating all that I am still going to write to this great creditor, who knows very well, whether I owe more than those others who think themselves better than May.

I am convinced that my sins, as far as I am to blame for them, are only in the area of my personal life, but not in my literature; in the latter area, I not conscious of any misdeeds. What I have achieved through my “traveller’s tales”, will be revealed only after my death by the thousands of letters I have received,

but even then, only my biographer will get to see them; they will not be published. These works used to be praised and adored, until one day, a certain unscrupulous person had nothing better to do than to state in public that I had also written other things aside from them, but that those were “abysmally” indecent. Even if this had been true, it could not have changed the “traveller’s tales”, neither their inner contents nor their external form.

Nevertheless, from this day on, they were first regarded with suspicion, then they were slandered more and more, and finally they were even declared to be perfectly harmful and were expelled from the libraries, where they used to be welcomed before. Why?

Had they changed? No! Had the bibliographical customs, the laws of morality changed? No! Had the needs of the readers become different? This is not it either! But what other reason was there? This was simply because of this circle of people from the realm of trashy literature and colportage, who were determined to, as they themselves used to put it, “destroy me”. But is it humanly possible that such a circle of people could gain such an extensive and incomprehensible influence on the world literature and its critics? Unfortunately yes! I will have to write about this in the next chapter. This mob does not even stop at casting their own sins and literary crimes upon me and at presenting themselves as spotless! There are so-called critics which have been staining my reputation for as long as ten years with all kinds of slander on account of the novels I wrote for Muenchmeyer, but have not blamed the publisher a single time in even the slightest extent. I call this a disgrace!

It has been said that our publishers of trashy literature annually make fifty million marks from the German people. This is terrible, though this estimation is still far too low. A single trashy novel which is a so-called hit can cost the people more than five or six million, and there are catalogues in which, for instance, just the single company Muenchmeyer is offering fifty-eight - read it and be amazed - fifty-eight of these novels at the same time! You can figure it out; do the multiplications!

What a loss! What an immense amount of poison and mischief! How many hundreds, or even thousands, of people are busy creating and distributing this poison! And now, open your newspapers, magazines, and books to see who is

held responsible for all this, who is publicly accused, who is despised, jeered at, and slandered! Karl May, Karl May, again and again Karl May, and only and only Karl May! Where can ever another name be seen and read than just this one? Whatever have I done to be counted among the trash at all? Where are those two thousand real trashy authors, who restlessly make sure, year after year, that in Germany and in German-speaking Austria there will never be a shortage of trash?

In court, in “scientific” writings, in the meetings of commissions, in public speeches by writers, editors, teachers, ministers of the church, professors, artists, psychiatrists, at all fitting and unfitting occasions where the “moral degradation of the youth” is being discussed, Karl May is mentioned again and again! He is to blame, only he! He is the archetype of those who poison the youth! He is the father of all those ruthless characters like Captain Thuermer, Nick Carter, and Buffalo Bill!

My God, do these gentlemen really not know what they are doing?

What a sin they are committing? How they are talked about among those who know better? Let them name just a single case where it has been really proven in court, that someone has been corrupted by one of my books! Hundreds of trashy stories of the most morally corrupting kind have been read by such a boy, and also one volume or several volumes by Karl May. This one is known, but not the others; therefore, he must be the one to be singled out and to named as the perpetrator! Week after week, newspaper offices are sending me fifty, sixty, or seventy newspaper clips, where I am being executed instead of all those German trashy authors and trashy publishers. This is inhumanly cruel! They pile up their disgrace all over me, but tip their hats to those who are really guilty. Why are their names never mentioned? Why are these not nailed to the cross? There are hundreds of publishers and writers who have been punished for distributing indecent material. And even larger is the number of those who, with the full intent, publish filth for the youth, only to make money. Why are their names not given? Why are their crimes against the youth and the people ignored to the point of becoming guilty of being an accomplice? Why are they not attacked, but only me, the scapegoat for the entire mob of literature? The answer is very simple: It is a scheme, nothing but a scheme! And it can be nothing but a scheme, because no single person could possibly commit so many wrongdoings as I am charged with! I will have to shed some light on this with more details in the next chapter.

The accusations, which are being raised against me, have always been nothing but unsubstantiated statements. Not for a single one of them, a real proof has been given. On account of these accusations, I asked countless readers of my books, in letters and in personal conversations, whether they would be able to name one of my traveller's tales or one passage from them, which might be described as having a harmful effect. No one has been able to name just a single line, to which this would apply. Even my most unrelenting opponent, the newspaper called "Koelnische Volkszeitung", has been compelled to give me the following attestation: "Everything which is offensive to the youth *has*

*been carefully avoided,* though May's works are *not at all only*

*targeted at them; many thousands of adults* have already obtained a rich measure of recreation and information from these colourful images!" This attestation alone proves the current "scheme", because my books have remained entirely unchanged since that time, and the same gentleman who had attested this in public, was the first who has fallen victim to this scheme and has since then never been able to rise from this fall again.

To refute the allegations which are being raised against me, I feel compelled to risk committing an indiscretion by publishing the following letter, an indiscretion which this gentlemen, whom I esteem highly and honestly, will probably forgive. Doctor Peter Rosegger wrote to me on July the 2nd of this year from Krieglach.

"Dear Sir!

"The note I published in the Heimgarten is based on the judicial hearing in Charlottenburg, and as soon as, once again, a court will decide in your favour, I will, with great pleasure, take note of this.

“As a colleague, your case does concern me personally, and being your colleague, I also would like to take the liberty to give you my opinion on what would be the best manner for you to refute these allegations.

“In your place, I would ignore all the polemics which do not refer to the accusations in a factual manner. What you have confessed yourself from the time of your youth, should thereby be also taken care of, and hardly any person with a legal mind would still hold this against you, unless the court does so. That your travel accounts are not based on personal experiences, that they are just stories told in the first person, this also cannot be regarded as an objectionable act on your part by any man of literature. Thus, the only thing that is left is to finally come forward with the factual proof that those frequently mentioned obscene passages were not written by you, but edited in by the publisher. As far the plagiarisms are concerned, you have been accused of, experts ought to be able to decide to which extent these might be plagiarisms or to which extent they are only rewritten subject matters and thoughts. Based on the first editions, comparing them with the new editions, it ought to be possible to determine, whether the manner, the train of thought, and the style of the newly added sentences organically fit with your style and the book or not. I think, you should now concentrate all of your defence to such realities and push incessantly for these things to be finally decided in court. All other articles written by your friends, who are just talking in general about your works’

outstanding qualities, which are by no means disputed, could not possibly have any special effect on this embarrassing affair as such.

“So, set all means in motion to arrive at a vindication in court.

Should this be unsuccessful, absolute silence will be the best course of action, and should this be successful, even that part of the press which supports your presents opponents will also have to accept the court’s exoneration and spread the word among the people.

“Sickness has delayed this letter. Forgive this openness, which comes from

honest benevolence, and let me greet you “yours truly Peter Rosegger.”

Krieglach, 7/2/1910.

That Peter Rosegger, the distinguished, sensitive, and humanely thinking aristocrat of the mind, regards what he has mentioned concerning my youth as finished and done away with, goes without saying. Only lowly developed persons can wade through such dregs and residues. I myself have also, a long time ago, erased this chapter of my life, and thus I have to judge everyone who talks or writes about me by the same standards which I here find in Rosegger’s letter. He who does not forgive, will not be forgiven either; this is the just law of heaven and of earth.

As far as the “obscenities” are concerned as well as the proof that they were not written by me, I will have to discuss this subject in the next chapter, but let me make one remark, which I deem necessary, right here and now. This is that I am not the one who has to prove that these indecent passages were not written by me, but rather they will have to prove to me that I am the author.

This is just as self-evident as it is correct. No judge of our times would even consider dragging me back to the times of thumb-screws and the “Spanish maiden”, when the accuser was not required to prove anything, but the accused was the one who had to prove his innocence. This simply had to be impossible in most cases. For strategic reasons in the course of a lawsuit, I have been falsely accused of having written the “Book of Love” for Muenchmeyer. How can I prove that this is untrue? Let’s suppose Muenchmeyer’s lawyer had come up with the insane idea to assert in court that Peter Rosegger had written the notorious “Temple of Venus”. Would Rosegger supply the proof that this was a lie? Or would he say that the truth of this assertion would have to be proven to him? I am convinced, he would do the latter. And I do so as well. I demand that my original manuscripts are brought in as evidence. There can be no other proof.

As far as the acts of plagiarism are concerned, Peter Rosegger had mentioned, the situation is like this: The Benedictine monk Father Poellmann has written a

series of articles against me and my works, starting with the threat that out of my works he would construct a figurative noose around my neck, to “whip me out of the temple of German art”. Here, he has employed the right metaphor, for every one of his allegations, he afterwards cast upon me, was nothing but a snap of a whip, harsh, sharp, tough, loveless, and sadistic, therefore outraging the readers, and the echoes of its snap faded away without effect. It was also such an empty crack of a boy’s whip, when he accused me of plagiarism and unsuccessfully made every effort in proving the truthfulness of his allegation. There, he talked like an ignorant man and could therefore achieve nothing but the well known effects of ignorance.

The newspaper called “Grazer Tagespost” wrote about this: “Father Poellmann, a well known gentleman, who has just lately, with genuinely Christian humility, awarded himself the decorative cognomen of a ‘respected critic’, has very quickly forgotten the moral defeat which he had suffered in his battle of name-calling against the travelling author Karl May, because recently he again put his foot in his mouth *etc. etc.*”

The thing was that in some of my very first and oldest traveller’s tales, which I wrote when I did not possess the necessary experience yet, I let the events I described take place before a geographical background which I took from well known, readily accessible books. This is not just allowed, it even happens quite frequently. To adapt descriptions of places for one’s own needs, can never be a theft. A literary theft, plagiarism this is, is only committed when essential components of another author’s mental creation are copied and then used in a manner which makes them an essential component of the plagiarist’s work and thereby the impression is created that they were his own thoughts. But I have never done something like this and I also never will. Works of geography, especially when the information contained has become common knowledge, can be used without thinking of it twice, as long as no entire printed sheets or sequences of pages are copied identically and the second author’s work, in spite of the copied parts, forms an independent mental achievement. In the introduction to Voigtlaender’s book on “Authorship and Publishing Law” it reads:



“No person creates the world of his thoughts solely by himself.

He constructs it on top of what others have invented, said, and written before him or together with him. Only then at best, his very own creation begins. Even the most creative of all activities, the one of a poet, ranks highest, achieves the greatest success, when it consecrates with an artistic form those ideas, which along with the poet, are also thought and felt by his entire people. And not even the form is entirely the poet’s property, because the form is supplied by the refined language, “which creates literature and thinks for you”, and which has given to many a man who thinks himself to be a poet more than the form, but also thoughts or the appearance of thoughts. To put it brief, writers and artists are with their knowledge and abilities in the midst and on the top of the cultural achievements of many millennia. If Goethe had grown up on a lonely island, he would not have become Goethe. But once someone has been granted such a gifted spirit, that he has been able to advance the cultural achievements of mankind by one step, because he has been allowed to continue the ancestors’ work, then it is just right *thathis\_*

*workin\_turn\_shall\_in\_due\_time\_be\_made\_availableforothers,to*

*useit\_freely,notjust\_its\_contents,\_butalsoits\_form.“\_*

This is what the publisher of the law says, and there is no cause to dispute what he says. I, not even having committed what he explicitly permits, am thereby perfectly vindicated. Someone else wrote: “Everything is more or less plagiarism committed against achievement of culture, the mind, or the imagination. The intellectual upper class, those who possess education and culture to a higher degree, will always, more or less, feed on *\_one\_*

reservoir which has been filled by the achievements of other, earlier, greater minds.”

In issue no. 268 of the “Feder” <pen>, the magazine for authors and journalists, coming out two times per month, it says: “Since it is impossible for author of popularised scientific articles to make something up, everyone has to be also a plagiarist to a certain degree. If the main part of the related thoughts are new, one

might very well be justified in using suitable ornaments from already existing works. According to Emerson, *thegreatest\_*

*geniusis\_atthesame\_time\_alsothegreatest\_borrower.\_* Here, all depends on how it is done. *Youmay\_take\_what\_is\_good\_wherever\_*

*youfind\_it,\_* if you want to achieve great purpose with it; but you must not let it show; something truly new has to be produced from the borrowed material.”

It is a well known fact that Maeterlinck [a] had simply copied in one of his plays three scenes from Paul Heyse. Heyse protested; but Maeterlinck laughed at him and just had the play published under his name. It is just as well known that the popular song from “Der Freischuetz” entitled “Wir winden dir den Jungfernkranz”

<we weave for you the bridal wreath> was not written by Weber, but an almost entirely unknown chief conductor from Gotha. Weber heard it and used it in his “Freischuetz”, without caring about the danger of being described as a plagiarist and a thief. It is generally accepted that Shakespeare was the greatest literary thief we know. If the principles of Father Poellmann would be applied, even various authors of biblical books would have to be called literary thieves. I could continue listing an even greater number of examples, but want to limit myself to citing Goethe, our very greatest classic, and Alexander Dumas, the most successful novelist of the modern age. Dumas borrowed extraordinary much.

He could not exist without outside help and exceeded in this very far beyond what is permissible in literature. For instance, it is known that he has exploited the tale of the “Gold Bug” by Edgar Poe, to create some of the most exciting passages of his “Count of Monte Christo”. And as far as Goethe is concerned, I will quote from a short article, which was recently published in several newspapers under the title “Goethe on plagiarism”: [a] In 1908, Maurice Maeterlinck (1862-1949, Nobel Prize 1911) had turned to Paul Heyse (1830-1914, Nobel Prize 1910) via his German translator Friedrich von Oppeln-Bronikowski (1873-1936) to ask for his permission to use two ideas from Heyse’s play “Mary of Magdala” in his own play on the same topic in exchange for a share in the royalties. Heyse was outraged and harshly rejected this offer. Maeterlinck nevertheless used Heyse’s ideas, but in a manner which did not

constitute plagiarism and openly pointed this out in an appendix to the German edition of his play. Heyse complained in an article and von Oppeln-Bronikowski answered by publishing the letters which had been exchanged between them and referred to an expertise, attesting that this was not a case of plagiarism. In 1911, a letter by von Oppeln-Bronikowski was published in a magazine, denouncing Karl May's version as an audacious lie.

“Nowadays, it is very easy to be regarded as a plagiarist. An author only has to fail to quote the source from which he has taken one or another passage, may it be intentionally or unintentionally. Everyone has such a dear friend, who will, after having been so fortunate to discover the plagiarist, publicly denounce him. Richard von Kralik has recently been accused of plagiarism, because he was - with out any guilt on his part -

quoted incorrectly. We want to remind those who enjoy sniffing out plagiarism of Goethe's view on plagiarism. The subject of his conversation with Eckermann on January the 18th, 1825, were Lord Byron's supposed plagiarisms. See `Eckermanns Gespraech mit Goethe' <Eckermann's conversations with Goethe>, 3rd edition, volume I, page 133. There, Goethe said: `Byron also does not know how to defend himself against such simple-minded attacks, directed against himself by his own nation; he should have spoken out more forcefully against them. *Whateveris there, this is*

*mine*, he should have said. *WhetherIhave taken it from real*

*lifeor fromabook, this is allthesame; theonly thing which*

*matteredwas thatIused it properly!* Walter Scott needed a scene from my `Egmont', and he had a right to take it, *and*

*becauseitwasdone in an intelligent manner, he istobe*

*praised*. Thus, he has also recreated my character of `Mignon' in one of his novels, but whether he has done it with just as much wisdom, is a different question. Lord Byron's `transformed devil'

is an extended Mephistopheles, and this is right so. If he had wanted to avoid the similarity on an original whim, he would have had to achieve a worse result.

Thus, my Mephistopheles sings a song written by Shakespeare, and why should he not do so? Why should I take the trouble of inventing a song of my own, while Shakespeare's was just right and said just what it was supposed to? Therefore, when the beginning of my `Faust' has some similarity with the one found in the book of `Job', this is again just right so, and I am rather to be praised than to be scolded for that.'”

This shall be the end of this short selection of famous names as references. What have out most famous authors done without having suffered such verbal abuse? And what have I done to be treated like the lowest of all cheaters and thieves? I have, without thinking much of it, decorated some of my small, Asian tales with entirely irrelevant geographical and ethnographical arabesques, which I found in books, which, for a long time, belong to the public. This is permissible. This is even my right. But what does Father Poellmann say to this? He resorts to public name-calling, saying I was a “*pirateinthefieldofliterature,*\_

*forall\_eternitytheprime\_example\_ofaliterary\_thief!*“\_

Emerson, one of the most famous and most noble men of America, says: “The greatest genius is at the same time also the greatest borrower.” And Goethe says: “Whatever is there, this is mine.

Whether I have taken it from real life or from a book, this is all the same!” How would Father Poellmann have to pass an analogous judgement on these two champions? To him, they would have to be “for all eternity, the worst among all literary fiends”, exuding the stench of greedy rapacity and moral corruption! A criticism which is thus ignorant, thus inexperienced, thus self-promoting, and thus exceeding all limits, as this one, constitutes a danger not just to literature, but also to the entire people.

I have written my “traveller's tales” just the way I had originally planned to write them for the human soul, for the soul, and only for the soul. And only the soul alone, for which they have been written, shall read them, for it alone can understand and comprehend me. I do not pick up my pen for soulless readers.

An exemplary author, writing exemplary stories for exemplary readers is not

what I am or I ever would want to be or become.

Once we will have reached this point that there are only exemplary authors, exemplary readers, and exemplary books, this will be the end! I am so bold to assert that we must not use the existing exemplary books, but rather the existing trash as examples, to model our own books after, if we wish to achieve what the true friends of the people seek to achieve. Let us not write like the boring ones, which are not read, let us rather write like the trashy authors, who know how to win a hundred thousands and millions of subscribers! But our topics shall be noble, as noble as our purposes and goals. Write for the great soul! Do not write for the tiny spirits, on whom your efforts will be wasted and dispersed, without them ever being grateful to you. Because however much effort you put into seeking their applause, they will still maintain that they were able to do it better, though they are not capable of anything at all! And do not write anything small, at least nothing earthly small. But rather raise your eyes up to how everything fits together on the big scale. Small things might also be found there, but behind and in these small things, the truly great things live. And even if you should commit mistakes in the process, mistakes as many and as big as the ones Karl May has made, this will do no harm. It is better to occasionally stumble on the path which leads upwards and to finally reach the top regardless, than not to stumble on the path which leads downwards and to succumb to the depth. Or even to run round and round one's own equator, holding one's head up high and taking proud steps, always returning to oneself again and again, without having climbed over any higher ground. For mountains are what we must have, ideals, highly situated intermediate stops and final goals.

Perhaps, I have just too many ideals and goals and am therefore running the risk not to achieve a single one of them; but I do not fear that this might be so. I have already said what I want and what goals I am seeking; I do not need to repeat it. And I have already had to overcome so many steep heights, that I cannot possibly regard myself as one of those poor devils who never leave the plane of their own equator. There are some people who recommend my style as an example for others; there are different people who say that I had no style; and thirdly, there are people who maintain that I did have a style, but that it was an extraordinarily bad one. The truth is that I do not pay any attention to my style at all. I write whatever comes from my soul, and I write it the way I hear it inside of me. I never change anything, and never improve anything. Thus, my style is

my soul, and not my “style”, but my soul shall talk to the readers.

I also do not employ any so-called artistic form. My literary garments have not been cut to size, sewn, or even ironed by any tailor. It is natural cloth. I wrap myself in it, drape it as I need it or according to the mood I am in when I write. Therefore, what I write has such a direct effect and not an effect which would be achieved by pretty outward appearances, which possess no internal value. I do not want to capture the reader, not grasp him externally, but rather I want to enter in his inner self, I want to access his soul, his heart, his emotions. There I will stay, for there I can and may stay, because I neither come with distracting forms nor distracting garments and am just the way the soul wants me to be. That this is the right thing, decades of beautiful experiences have confirmed to me. I must, can, and may take the liberty of displaying this honest and natural quality, because solely by these means, I am able to effectuate what I want to achieve, because I do not ask my readers to conform to a different or even higher artistic standard than I ask from myself, and because the time has not come, yet, when I will have to give my work also an external form, which is on an aesthetically higher level. Now, I still make my sketches, and sketches are commonly accepted as they are.

In my entire work, not including the humorous short stories and village-tales from the Ore Mountains, there is not a single character which was fully developed and perfected by me, not even Winnetou and Hadji Halef Omar, those two about whom I have written more than about any other characters. After all, I am not finished with my own development yet, I am still changing. Inside of me, everything is still moving ahead, and of the characters within me, all of my topics are moving along with me. I know my goal; but until I will have reached it, I am still travelling, and all of my thoughts are still travelling. Naturally, none of our poets and artists, and mainly none of our great classics, have postponed their work, until they have grown mentally mature enough, but I am to be regarded as an outsider in this respect as well, am even described by many as an outlaw or outcast, and therefore, I may not even by a long shot take those liberties which others take for granted. What is regarded as the most natural thing in the world with others, is in me either regarded as bad or ridiculous, and things which are accepted as an excuse, a reason for forgiveness, for others are being ignored in my case.

One single time, I have intended to write something of artistic value, my “Babel and Bible”. What was the consequence? It has been described as a “miserable fabrication”, and so much mockery and sneering has been heaped up on it, as if it had been written by a harlequin or an ape. Such an experience makes a person stand back and await his time. And this time will come for sure.

Literary buffoons can very well be swept off the scene, but spiritual movements cannot be suppressed, for they are invincible.

I would not think of making accusations, since nothing would come out of it, anyhow. Nevertheless, I must not fail to give one example to illustrate the fact I touched upon here, one single example which says it all thus clearly that I can easily forgo all other evidence. This example concerns an organisation, which has been founded for the purpose of establishing libraries for the people and making books more readily available, and which has distributed, until now, several thousands of my volumes each year.

Suddenly, they stopped this, and being asked about it, the central office of this organisation issued the following statement, which had been published by several newspapers: “On our part, we do refrain from the further distribution of May’s writings and no longer offer these books through our catalogues, but we do not intent to express by this that the contents of May’s traveller’s tales would be objectionable, and we also to not ask the boards of our organisations to go through the trouble of removing these books from the libraries for that matter. Our current disapproving position is not directed against the \_writings,\_ but against the *personage* of the author. \_Thus,youcan\_continueto

*allowthese\_volumestobe\_checked\_outwithoutany\_needfor*

*concern.*” This is surely enough! My books are beyond reproach; but I as a person am publicly condemned! Why? Due to this “scheme” I already talk about earlier. Therefore, do not think that the “KarlMay-persecution” or, to put it a bit more decently, the “KarlMay-problem” was a matter of literature. Here are, by no means, literary or even ethical reasons at play, but it is, to call it by its proper name, a solely personal butchering for the morally lowest reasons pertaining to my lawsuits. What they say in this context about moral and journalistic necessities is nothing but a bombastic show, to conceal the truth. If someone would want to write a novel about this, this could become the most sensational one of all colportage novels, and the main characters would be the following:

The former chief editor Dr. Hermann Cardauns in Bonn, the former colporteur Pauline Muenchmeyer in Dresden, the Franciscan monk Dr. Expeditus Schmidt in Munich, the former social democrat Rudolf Lebius in Charlottenburg, who has seceded from the Christian church, the Benedictine Father Ansgar Poellmann in Beuron, and the lawyer of the colporteur Muenchmeyer, Dr. Gerlach in Niederloessnitz near Dresden. This novel would be most important for the purpose of shedding some light on the present legislation and would also cast surprising side-lights on other conditions, conditions of society, business, and the psyche. There, we would get to see much filth, very much filth, which is anything but tasteful, and thus, I want, since I have to mention and demonstrate this filth here as well, to try my best to get this over with as quickly as possible.

### VIII. My Lawsuits

Jorgensen [a], whom my readers will probably know, says in his parable “The Shadow” to the poet: “You do not know what you are doing, when you are sitting and writing here and your soul is filled by the power of the wine and the night. You do not know how many people’s fate is reshaped, created, changed by a single line of yours on the white paper. You do not know how many a human joy you are killing, how many a death sentence you are signing, here, in your quiet solitude, by the peaceful lamp, between the flowery glasses and the bottle of burgundy. Consider, *thatwe\_othersactout\_whatyoupoets\_write\_* We are as you have shaped us. The youth of this realm repeats your creation like shadows. We are as chaste as you are; we are as immoral as you want us to be. The young men believe according to your belief in or denial of any faith. The young girls are as decent or frivolous as the women are your glorify.”

[a] Jens Johannes Jorgensen (1866-1956) In this, Jorgensen is perfectly right. His opinion coincides exactly with my own. Yes, I will even go far beyond his. Poets and novelists have a much greater, creative or destructive, purifying or soiling influence than most people suspect. If it is true what the newer psychology says, that “a person is not a single being, but an entire drama”, then an author’s work might possibly be even regarded as more akin to a divine creation than to a



creation of human labour. Because I am very much aware of this, I am also aware of the immense responsibility which every one of us writers has, as soon as we take up the pen. Whenever I do so, I do it with the honest intention, to create only something good, but never something evil. Thus, you can imagine how astonished I was, when I found out that I had been said to have written “abysmally indecent” books for the publishing company of H.G. Muenchmeyer. The expression “abysmally indecent” was invented by Cardauns, who is known for having the peculiarity to indulge in the most exaggerated harshness whenever he opposes someone. Then, in his articles, all things are not just proven, but “evidently proven”, not made up, but “cunningly made up”, not distorted, but “distorted beyond recognition”. Therefore, in describing these Muenchmeyer novels, because they were said to be written by me, the simple word “indecent” was not enough, but it was the most natural thing in the world that they had to be even “abysmally indecent”.

The first trace of these “indecencies” of mine was discovered over in the United States. Councillor of Commerce Pustet, who owns branch offices there, wrote to me about this rumour and wished me to respond to this. I did so. I answered him that I did not know anything about any indecencies and that I would investigate the matter, if necessary even in court. I would then inform him of the results. This settled the matter for him. He was an honourable gentleman, a man with a keen mind and a good heart, who would never have even considered to go about anything in a clandestine manner. We liked each other. He is with absolute certainty not even in the slightest degree to blame for the indescribably filthy and disgustingly passionate agitation persecuting me. Because the rumour came from America, I had to investigate there first. This required a long time, and I was unable to obtain any specific information. I only knew that the rumour was about those novels I had written for Muenchmeyer, but I found no one who would have been able to name the chapters and the passages to me where this indecency would be contained. And to laboriously search through all five novels, this are about eight hundred printed sheets, on account of a mere, vague rumour, without even knowing what to look for, was something for which I did not have any time to waste, and this also would have been asking too much of me, anyhow. Whoever had the guts to accuse me would be required to know these indecent passages precisely and had the duty to name them to me. I waited for this to happen.

But no one came forward, who would have done this. Pustet did not do it either. Probably, he knew just as little about those supposed indecencies as I. Unfortunately, I had been forced, some time later, to stop working for his magazine for a second time.

The first time I had done something like this was when Heinrich Keiter was still alive. He had rather significantly shorted one of my works, without asking me for my permission. I have never put up with any corrections or abridgments. The readers are to get to know me as I am, with all faults and shortcomings, but not as an editor cuts me down to size. Therefore, I informed Pustet that he could not expect any further manuscripts from me. He tried to change my mind by means of letters, but in vain. Then he, the old gentleman, came personally to Radebeul. This was moving, but equally unsuccessful. Then, he sent his nephews, quite naturally with the same negative result, because after all, neither of them had been the one who had violated my rights.

Then, the right man came, Heinrich Keiter in person. He promised me that it should never happen again, and on account of this, I retracted my refusal. Certain people are still holding this against me. They expressed it like this: "Heinrich Keiter had to make a kotow [a] before Karl May." I possess letters on this topic, written to me by no ordinary person. But he had only himself to blame, not me. I have respected Heinrich Keiter, as everyone respected him. I recognise all of his merits and still feel sorry for having been compelled, at this time, to show that I had a backbone. There was no other way. I had to have the hard cover edition of my "traveller's tales" printed on the basis of the texts of the "Hausschatz" magazine, and therefore, I could not permit that my manuscripts were changed in any way.

[a] Kotow (Chinese): Kneeling and knocking one's head on the floor as a gesture of homage. Here, the term is, of course, used figuratively, meaning to be forced to humiliate oneself.

Later, I wrote for Pustet my novel in four volumes "Im Reiche des silbernen Loewen" <In the Empire of the Silver Lion>. I had just reached the end of the second volume, when friends of mine among the editorial staff of other

publishers sent me a advertising pamphlet from the “Hausschatz”, the contents of which caused me to repeat my previous refusal. I telegraphed Pustet that I had to discontinue the work in progress and that I would write no further word for him. He even had to send the unprinted manuscript in his possession back to me, for which I returned the royalties to him he had payed for it. I would not have mentioned this with a single word, if not, a short time ago, I had received a threat, though only from a very irrelevant party, to reveal facts from that time. Therefore, I have used this opportunity to state the truth here. And at the same time, I furthermore state for a fact that I never stopped being on a personally friendly basis with Councillor of Commerce Pustet and that I felt an honest joy and satisfaction when, after about ten years had passed, he sent his present editor of the “Hausschatz”, the Royal Genuine Councillor Dr. Otto Denk, to see me at Leinfelder’s hotel in Munich, to persuade me to work for the “Hausschatz” again. I then proceeded to write the “Mir of Jinnistan” for him.

With this, I have jumped far ahead of Cardauns’s accusations of “abysmal indecency” against me and am now turning back to them, to uncover the cause and the root of this matter. The cause is Muenchmeyer, and the root is just the same. The facts which contributed to this affair form a chain of events, extending over more than thirty years, the links of which are intimately connected on the levels of logic, business, and the law. Most of it has been proven. Some of it is still hidden in the files, waiting to be exposed to the light of day. I am not willing to prejudge the pending lawsuits and will therefore only discuss those points which have been fully resolved.

I have already said that Muenchmeyer knew about my prior convictions. He even knew all the lies which had been added to them. He wished very much that I would write a novel about this; but I rejected this most decisively. In the circle of his friends and acquaintances, I have not kept my past secret, but rather I have told them about it without any reservations and explained in detail my views on criminals and crimes, guilt, punishment, and the penal system. Not a single member of the Muenchmeyer family has a right to pretend not to have known about this. The workers of the company found out about it, too, the typesetters, printers, and all others, as well as the authors, contributing to the publications. “May has been punished; he has been to prison”, they said, sometimes quietly,

sometimes louder, but soon spreading everywhere. Thus, it is fundamentally wrong to start talking about sudden “revelations” or even about my “unmasking”, now.

Whoever pretends that he had unmasked me, is lying.

It is an important fact that Muenchmeyer had a rather pronounced preference for working with previously convicted people in particular, for certain business reasons. Going through the list of authors, both men and women, who have written for him, the percentage of those with a criminal record is rather significant.

I already noticed this very soon after I had joined his company.

Walter [a], his main factotum, to whom he assigned all the task nobody else was allowed to know about, had prior convictions as well. Very soon after I had taken over as editor, he brought in a former official of the postal services from Vienna, who had embezzled money, to be one of my coworkers. When similar cases occurred repeatedly and I asked him for his reasons, he answered: “An author who has been punished can be made to put up with anything, because he fears that his criminal record will be disclosed.” “So, this also includes me?!” I exclaimed, astonished at such an honesty. “Nonsense!” he replied. “With you, the matter is entirely different. We are friends! And after all, you’re no ordinary man, who would put up with anything! Even if I would not honestly care about you, any attempt to cross you would have to fail!” He tried his best to remove the mistrust which had arisen in me, but it could not be made to disappear entirely and was a contributing factor in my resignation, when I left my job as an editor on account of that proposal of marriage. Later, when after the time of six years I started to write the “Waldroeschen”

for him, these second thoughts against him resurfaced again in me.

But the exceptional position, he granted me in his personal life and in his business, the exceptional royalties he payed me, and most of all the objections my wife made at every opportunity against my distrust, all of this influenced me so that I finally returned to my previous trust in him.

[a] August Walther (1827-1900). The misspelling of this name occurs throughout the original text with only one exception.

(In German, a “th” is pronounced the same as a “t”.) That I did not receive any proof sheets to read and therefore also did not get my manuscripts of the novels I wrote for Muenchmeyer back, I had already mentioned. Thus, I could not verify, whether the printed version matched my original manuscript. But honesty in this respect had been promised to me in such very certain terms that I did not consider any fraud possible. I also thought it impossible that Muenchmeyer could later ever pretend that he had bought my novels with all rights not just up to the twenty thousandth subscriber, but forever, because, first of all, I had kept all of his letters, in which he repeated everything, we had (not) [a] put into a written agreement, one thing after another, and secondly I also had another fully valid proof in my hands, that he did not own the rights forever. This was that he had made, in writing, the attempt to obtain these rights later on. He had done so using a reciprocal bond, which he sent to me by means of this ex-convict factotum Walter, to have it signed by me. But I rejected this extraordinarily cunning messenger with his bond.

This Walter was also the man who always assured me, in writing and orally, upon my inquiries that those twenty thousand had not been reached yet. Furthermore, I was not worried in the least, neither for my rights nor for my “fine gratification”. I could be sure of my rights, and the Muenchmeyers were now financially so well off, that they, as I thought, were more than just able to pay. That he lost again on poorly selling novels what he earned on the bestsellers, and that he had fallen in with bill-jobbers, causing a severe depletion of his available funds, about all of this I knew nothing. Thus, I was convinced that I could wait calmly and that I had no reason at all to pose premature, and therefore insulting, demands. Furthermore, my wife was thus completely against all forms of urging and pushing in business matters, that I now also had to fear for the outward peace of my home, if I had not been as forgiving towards Muenchmeyer as she wished. The publishers of colportage also maintain that, for their bookkeeping, it would be much harder and require much more time than with other publishers to prove how many regular subscribers there are. All of the time, some of them are cancelling, and new ones are joining in, therefore I was patient.

[a] I guess, the word “nicht” <not> has been lost in the original text. Otherwise, it makes no sense.

In the year 1891, I made the acquaintance of my current publisher F.E. Fehsenfeld from Freiburg, Breisgau. I left it up to him to publish in the form of books those works which had previously been published by Pustet in Regensburg and made an agreement with him that he would thereafter also publish those written for Muenchmeyer. He instantly tackled those first ones, and they sold excellently. We were both convinced that we would not be less successful with the Muenchmeyer novels, but postponed the latter, until the Pustet series would be complete. Each of the two series was supposed to consist of thirty volumes. Wherever my past work fell short of filling these volumes, I had to write more. For the Pustet series, this turned out to be about ten volumes, which I still had to deliver. This work left me no time to worry about my Muenchmeyer stuff right now. It was also because of this that the unexpected news that Muenchmeyer had suddenly died had to be, as far as the business was concerned, entirely indifferent to me. I only inquired who his legal successor was, and when I heard that his widow continued the business with authorisation of the other heirs, I for my part saw no reason to worry.

Then, something surprising happened. Mrs. Pauline Muenchmeyer sent me a messenger, who had been instructed to draw out of me, whether I might be inclined to write a new novel for her. This messenger was also an “ex-convict”. I sent him away, without allowing him to successfully complete his task, not giving any special thought to the reason for his errand. At this time, I did not know what I found out only much later, which was that Muenchmeyers were not as splendidly to do as I thought. A family meeting had been held, and the decision had been reached that the situation should be improved by a new novel by Karl May. I had neither the time nor the inclination to write it, but decided, in case the attempt would be repeated, to enter into negotiations regardless, to find out something definite about the success of my previous novels. And the repetition of the attempt came. Mrs.

Muenchmeyer herself called on us in person. She visited us repeatedly. She made her request. She even offered to pay the royalties in advance. She also sent

Walter, the factotum, and had him write letters. I informed them that I would not be able to deliver anything new, before the issue of the older novels was not full resolved. First of all, I simply had to know the current number of subscribers of my five novels; there had to be much more than twenty thousand by now. Mrs. Muenchmeyer promised to inform me. She invited me and my wife for dinner at her place, in order to give me this information there. We came. She confessed that those twenty thousand had been reached, and even for all novels, not just one of them; but a precise calculation would have to be done first, and this would be so immensely difficult and time consuming in the colportage business. So, I should be patient. As far as my rights were concerned, they were hereby mine again, I could now fully use these novels for my own purposes. Then, I asked her to send me my manuscripts, based on which I would have them typeset and printed. She said they had been burnt; in their place, she would send me the printed novels and would have them, as a special favour for me, bound in leather, first. This was done. A short time later, the books came in the mail; I was again in control of my works - - - so I thought! Of course, it had been impossible for me to publish them right away, since those written for Pustet had to come out first. So, I put these books aside for the time being, without being able to devote any time to an examination of their contents. I had reached my purpose, and writing a new novel was no longer up for discussion.

Nothing was heard from Mrs. Muenchmeyer any more. I attributed this to the fact that now those "fine gratifications" were due, the payment of which she was trying to avoid by keeping silent about it. But I did not force the issue; I had more work to do and could do without the money, if need be. I do not want to omit the fact that my wife, during all of this time, made every effort to keep me from being strict in my business affairs against Mrs.

Muenchmeyer. This preference of hers for Muenchmeyer and his widow constitutes the main reason for the otherwise incomprehensible forbearance I practised.

I was just about to begin a long journey to the Orient, when I found out that Mrs. Muenchmeyer wanted to sell her business.

Right away, I wrote her a letter, warning her against selling my novels along with it. I explained to her everything relating to this and started my journey in

upper Egypt. After I had returned from there to Cairo, I found letters awaiting me there, from which I found out that the sale had gone through in spite of my warning; the buyer's [a] name was Fischer. I did not hesitate to write to this gentleman. He answered me in a colporteur's tone that he had bought the Muenchmeyer business only on account of the novels by Karl May. All the rest would not be worth anything. He would exploit this work of mine as much as he possibly could and sue me for damages, if I would obstruct him in doing so. This tone caught my attention. This was a style which is usually only used on very worthless individuals. Probably, I had been described to this Mr. Fischer, who was perfectly unknown to me, in a way which caused him to be thus disrespectful. I wrote to my wife that she should, instantly and in as much detail as possible, give me an report about this case. For this purpose, I gave her the precise route of my journey. For six weeks, I waited in Cairo, fourteen days in Beirut, several weeks in Jerusalem. I wrote and telegraphed, but in vain; no report came. Finally, I received a few lines, in which she told me that she had been to Paris, but nothing further. When in Massawa, the capitol of Eritrea by the Red Sea, my Arabian servant brought me the mail, I was confronted with a huge pile of German newspapers, from which I, not having suspected a thing, learnt what had taken place at home in the meantime against me. Fischer had taken advantage of my absence by starting an illustrated edition of my Muenchmeyer novels, and in doing so he sounded the trumpets of advertisement in such a manner that everyone's attention had to be drawn towards this project.

My name had been given, though I had written these novels under pseudonym, with only one exception, and had imposed the obligation on Muenchmeyer, not to disclose this pseudonym under any circumstances. At the same time, it turned out that the novels were supposed to be published in revised versions. I became terribly scared. I wrote home and instructed a friend there, whom I could trust completely, to seek the assistance of a lawyer and to conduct my case until I would return home, if necessary even in court.

[a] The original book reads "Verkaeufer" <seller> instead of "Kaeufer" <buyer>. This must be a misprint.

This friend's name was Richard Ploehn, and he was the owner of the



“Saechsische Verbandstoffabrik” <Saxonian factory for bandaging material> in Radebeul, which he had founded. You will soon understand why I am going to talk about him for a while. He had an extraordinarily happy marriage. His family only consisted of him, his wife, and his mother-in-law. We were such close friends, that we called each other “Du” [a] and, in a manner of speaking, formed one single family. But to call not just me, but also my wife “Du”, was something Ploehn simply could not bring himself to do. He assured me that this would be impossible for him. Mrs.

Ploehn is now my wife. Therefore, I am not permitted to talk about her characteristics or even her outstanding qualities. The latter ones were purely pertaining to her soul. My first wife had never read any of my books. The purpose and contents of my writings was just as unknown and indifferent to her as my goals and ideals in general. But Mrs. Ploehn was an enthusiastic reader of mine and had a very solemn and deep understanding for all of my hopes, wishes, and intentions. Her husband was happy about this. He saw my struggle, my tireless work, often up to three times a week all night long, no helping hand, no warm glance, no encouraging word; my soul was alone, alone, alone as always and at all times. This pained him. Through his wife, he tried to persuade mine, to at least take care of the disrupting task of answering the mail, but in vain. Then, he asked me to permit his wife to do this; this would be a great joy for her and him. I permitted these two, good people to do so. From this time on, my correspondence was in the hands of Mrs. Ploehn. Thousands of readers received answers signed “Emma May”, without knowing that it had not been my wife, but a sisterly helper, who had eased my burden. More and more, she worked herself into the world of my thoughts and my mail, so that finally, I could, with every confidence, leave the entire correspondence up to her. Her husband was proud of it. Almost even prouder was her mother a very hard working, down to earth woman, accustomed to a simple life, who would have liked so very much to lend a hand, if it had been possible, for she also possessed a soul which would not want to stay in the lower reaches, but was seeking to rise upwards.

[a] See my footnote in chapter V. “Du” is the informal German word for “you”, which is only used to address close friends, relatives, and children. Using it against anybody else would be a sign of disrespect and an insult.

So, it was this friend whom I instructed to take my affairs as forcefully as possible into his hands, and he did it as well as he could. He hired a lawyer from Dresden to conduct the lawsuit and informed the entire German press that I was momentarily in Asia, but would not hesitate, after my return home, to defend myself against the intended gross violation of my rights. More could not be done for the moment, because it had been impossible for me to abort my journey. From my wife, I received no news. She was incapable of dealing with such serious business matters. But the Ploehns wrote, though those letters only caught up with me in Padang, on the island of Sumatra. They contained alarming news.

The press had started to write about my Muenchmeyer novels, and had done this in a manner which was unfavourable for me. Rumours were spread about me, which were partially ridiculous, partially unscrupulous. The newspapers wrote that I was not in the Orient at all, but that I was hiding, on account of a malignant disease, in the iodine resort Bad Toelz, in upper Bavaria. If I had suspected that this would go on in this deceitful, hateful, and vicious manner for an entire decade, I would have interrupted my journey after all and would have returned home as quickly as possible. If I had done this, I would have been spared all this inhumane torture and pains, which I have suffered during this long time. But unfortunately, I did not know yet at this time what had happened to my novels and what had been the guiding ideas concerning me, which were going around in Muenchmeyer's business and are still going around today. I believed that I could still settle the matter from afar and thought that I needed to do nothing more than to get precise information, from which the steps to be taken would have to result. Thus, I wrote home that my wife should come to Egypt with the Ploehns, where I would meet them in Cairo. They came, though much later than planned, because Ploehn had become ill on the way. What I found out from them did not sound favourable at all, and it furthermore struck me as very unspecific. The lawyer was still in the earliest stages of preparing the case. Fischer had declared that he would fight back with all possible means; he had bought my novels from Mrs.

Muenchmeyer; they were his righteously purchased property, payed for in cash, with which he could do whatever he wanted. The newspapers were biased against me. My Muenchmeyer novels were described as trashy. I realised that a lawsuit against the Muenchmeyers was unavoidable, and asked my wife for the documents I would need for this.

I have already said that I had kept Muenchmeyer's letters. Their contents had constituted such strong evidence in a lawsuit against Muenchmeyer that I simply had to win it. These letters were, together with other thing of equal importance, kept in a specific drawer of my desk. Before my departure, I had especially informed my wife about this drawer and its contents, I had especially explained the purpose of the letters and had instructed her to make sure that not even the smallest piece of paper would get lost. When I now in Cairo asked her about these documents, she reassured me that they were still lying there just as I had entrusted them to her. Nobody had touched them. This calmed me down, because it meant a sure victory in the lawsuit. When my wife assured me of this, Mrs. Ploehn was with us and heard it.

She gave her an astonished look, but said nothing. At this time, I did not particularly notice this; but later, remembering this astonished, wide-eyed, disapproving look, I knew just too well what it was meant to say. What had happened was that one evening my wife had come to Mrs. Ploehn and had told her that she had just burnt our marriage certificate, on account of the omen it constituted. And some time later, she had told her in the same laughing manner that she had now also taken the documents from the desk drawer and had burnt them; by this, she wanted to prevent me from suing the Muenchmeyers. Mrs. Ploehn had been horrified by this, but was unable to change the fait accompli. Now, when she had to listen to this assurance of my wife that the letters still existed untouched, the first rupture of that internal split occurred in her, which did not become externally evident until nothing could be kept secret any more. We travelled to Egypt, Palestine, Syria, and returned home via Constantinople, Greece, and Italy. During this time, my wife had, upon repeated questions, always stuck to her story that the documents were still lying, perfectly unharmed, in the drawer in question. She finally became angry and refused to permit any further mentioning of the subject. But when I came home and the first thing I did was to go to desk, I found the drawer - - - empty! Being held responsible for this, she declared that she had indeed burnt and destroyed the letters. She had always been a friend of the Muenchmeyers and still was their friend today. Though she knew that I was right, she would not stand for me suing the Muenchmeyers. Therefore, she had burnt the papers. You can imagine how I felt, but I controlled myself and did what I was already in the habit of doing for many years in such cases: I was quiet, took my hat, and left.

In the meantime, the attacks in the press against me had been getting more and more numerous and direct. I was accused of having written piously and indecently at the same time. I had a look at the novels, which Mrs. Muenchmeyer had bound for me, and found that they diverged from my original manuscripts, they had been changed. So, that was why the manuscripts had been burnt, instead of being preserved for me! I was not supposed to be able to prove the changes! The first thing I did was that I informed the press of this and asked them to wait for the decision of the court. Then, I most quickly filed the complaint. I did not want to pursue the matter in a civil, but rather a criminal trial, but met with such an opposition from my wife in this that I gave it up. I sought advice from several lawyers, not just in Dresden, but also in Berlin and elsewhere. I would have like so much to sue them directly on account of the “abysmal indecencies”, I had been accused of, but I was assured unanimously that this was impossible. A suit could not be concerned with abstract concepts, but would have to be based on material reason. Most of all, I would have to prove that I was the legitimate owner of the novels concerned, and that I therefore had the right to sue. The best thing would be to sue for a “rendering of the account”. This was done.

It was about at this time that the buyer of Muenchmeyer’s business, Mr. Fischer, called on me. I had no reasonable reason for sending him away; he was allowed to enter. The conversation was highly interesting, from a psychological point of view as well as concerning the lawsuit. Fischer did not at all conceal the fact that he knew that I had been to prison. He remarked that whoever had such a skeleton in his closet would do very well to refrain from going to court, otherwise the matter might very easily come out differently than one might think. My novels would now be his property. They had already been changed before, and now he would have them rewritten once more, just as it would please him. If I would conduct a lawsuit against him, this could take more than ten years; but until then, I would be long since ruined. But he had come to extend his hand to me, to avoid all this trouble. I was supposed to pay him seventy thousand marks, then he would give my novels up and surrender them to me with all rights included. Then, it would be easy for me to silence the entire excitement of the press against me with a single stroke.

He would be offering me his help in this. He would know more than I would suspect. He knew the entire Muenchmeyer business. He had been told

everything. But he could not give the rights up for less than seventy thousand marks, since he had payed one hundred and seventy-five thousand marks.

It goes without saying that I did not go along with this suggestion. I made clear to him that I would not give a single pfennig and that I was firmly resolved to sue. So, he wanted to know whom I would sue, him or Muenchmeyer's widow. He would advise me to do the latter, because, in this case, he could probably testify in my favour, for he was not at all satisfied with this woman, but was rather constantly arguing with her.

After this, he left with the warning that I should be so very careful concerning my prior convictions.

I was willing to sue Mrs. Muenchmeyer. But my wife and, probably as a consequence of this, my lawyer also urged me to refrain from this. Thus, Fischer was sued. But as it seemed, the widow did not feel like having herself excluded from this legal action. She joined in as a co-intervener [a] and has remained my opponent up to this day. I succeeded in obtaining an injunction against Fischer, which prohibited him from continuing to print my novels.

He was only allowed to complete the series. Being in this situation, which was very critical for him, he came to talk to my lawyer and complained about the loss he was going to suffer on account of this; it would already amount to forty thousand marks.

If this would not stop, he would even have to use very different means to defend himself than he had used up to now, and he would have to destroy me in the eyes of all of Germany by publishing my prior convictions in all the newspapers. When my lawyer informed me of this threat, it all became so very clear to me; I started to comprehend and felt obliged to probe this terrain. A meeting between Fischer and myself was arranged, in a private room of a wine-tavern, just the two of us. There, he talked openly. He told me everything he had found out from the Muenchmeyers about me and my novels during the negotiation of the sale. I found out about their entire battle plan, of which I did not have a clue before. He had been let to believe that I had been to prison for having had intimate contact with schoolgirls as a teacher. This would fit perfectly with the allegations in the

newspapers that I had written indecent novels. This only had to be published, then I would be destroyed forever. Now, I was a famous man and would have to avoid such publications; they knew this just as well I did. What I had agreed upon with Muenchmeyer concerning my novels would be irrelevant. Muenchmeyer was dead. It would all just depend on who would have to testify under oath. And they would know how to make sure that May would not get this opportunity.

His prior convictions would be the best help there could be for this. He would only have to be threatened with their publication, then he would surely give up every lawsuit. Two lines written to him are enough, and he will be quiet. "Him, we've got in our hands!"

[a] Intervener: A third party in a civil trial aside from the plaintiff and the defendant. German law further distinguishes between a "Hauptintervenient" <main intervener> and a "Nebenintervenient" <co-intervener>. (I do not know, whether there are any more proper legal terms for this in English.) A "main intervener" sues both parties and thus starts a new trial. A "co-intervener" joins an existing trial to defend his or her own interests, without joining either one of the two main parties.

In this manner, they had talked to Fischer, and this persuaded him to buy the business. Of this, he assured me. That my novels had been altered, he knew. He only did not know precisely by whom.

Probably by Walter. After all, he had nothing else to do than these kinds of things, and he also had to read the proof sheets.

And this was not a difficult task at all and could be done very quickly. Only one word would have to be changed or a few words would have to be added, and already the "indecent" is there, without which such novels are quite inconceivable. I would be able to prove these changes quite easily; I would only have to present my original manuscripts.

“But they have been burnt!” I interjected.

But Fischer denied this quite decisively. He insisted that they were still there. He could get them for me, though, of course, he would not do so under the present conditions, with me being his opponent in a lawsuit and ruining him with my injunction. He could only help me and testify in my favour, if I would drop this injunction and settle with him.

This conversation was infinitely important to me. I had to be careful. I wondered, whether I could trust him. If the original manuscripts were really still there, I would indeed been able to silence all accusations against me, as Fischer had said, with a single stroke. But he might have intended to deceive me, or he might have been deceived himself. I was not allowed to decide too hastily; I had to observe and to think, especially since this turn of events in my affairs occurred at a time in which severe internal struggles kept me thus busy that I was unable to find either time or space for other things. This was the time of my divorce.

To be honest, I very much tend towards the Catholic view of marriage, regarding it as a sacrament. If I would not be of this opinion, I would have taken this step much sooner and not only when my health, my life, and my entire internal and external existence was at stake. This step has been held against me to a high degree, and very unjustly so. Catholic critics, who, instead of staying on a factual basis, let their attacks wander over into the personal, have accused me in the same breath of being a Protestant and of having divorced my wife. How unlogical! It is because I am regarded as a Protestant that nobody has the right to hold that second fact against me. To every even just mildly decent person, a divorce is a matter which is most naturally treated with discretion. But mine was dragged through the newspapers, supplemented with the most disgusting marginal glosses, and abused for the most outrageous speculations. I want to skip all of this here, to remark on this, if I should be forced to do so, in another place. This time was not just for me, but also for Mrs. Ploehn, a time of almost deadly afflictions, because it deprived her of her husband, whom she loved with a self-sacrifice, as rarely a man was ever loved. I have already said that Ploehn

had become ill on the journey to Egypt. He only seemed to recover. The malady was repeated, after he had returned home. One year later, death came. Mrs. Ploehn almost collapsed.

If it had not been for her mother, she would have surely died, following her husband. Fortunately, the correspondence she conducted for me with my readers also offered her the spiritual relief and support she required. She owned two rented houses in Dresden, which she would have liked to sell, to be able to buy a piece of land in the country, belonging to the village Niedersedlitz, which had been offered to her. Fischer had moved his printing-plant there. His private apartment was also there.

Mrs. Ploehn asked me to accompany her on a visit of this lot, and once we happened to be in Niedersedlitz, the idea came most naturally to let Fischer know about it. He invited us to his private apartment, and there a negotiation evolved which led to a settlement the day after.

I want to make it as brief as possible. Fischer complained that, in buying the Muenchmeyer business, he had degraded himself to the level of a “trashy publisher”; he assured us that he was yearning to get out of this, and he insisted that I could assist him in this like nobody else. Of the latter, I was also convinced. He had purchased the altered novels, without Mrs. Muenchmeyer having the right to sell them to him. If he made sure that my original manuscripts were returned to me, he could drop the trashy stuff and publish my originals in their place; this would help him and me as well; he would no longer be a trashy publisher, and I would be able to prove that I had not written anything indecent. This was the basic idea of the settlement, and when we signed it, I was convinced that all disputes were resolved. At this time, Fischer attested to me publicly in the newspapers that the indecent passages of my Muenchmeyer novels *\_werenotthe\_productofmy\_*

*pen,but\_rather\_hadbeenput\_in\_byathird\_party.\_*

But unfortunately, my hopes turned out to be deceptive. Fischer was unable to get my original manuscripts; they did not exist any more; they had really been destroyed. So, it had been impossible for him to transform from a “trashy



publisher”, as he described himself in a letter to me, into a book publisher. He did make the attempt, though, to obtain an original novel even without my original manuscripts, in order to be able to drop the trash then, but I had to deny him the help, he demanded from me in this. What he demanded from me was to change the trash back into its former, impeccable version just based on my memory; but this was, considering the huge amount of about thirty thousand pages, tightly filled with text, an absolute impossibility. But he insisted on his contract, on our settlement, and though he was unable to do as he had promised, I was still supposed to do everything, which was, even if for no other reason than him, impossible. From this resulted a new disagreement and a new struggle, which extended beyond his death and was only by his heirs brought to a peaceful conclusion. They saw things clearer than he did, and they were of calm, unbiased minds. They were experts, which is to say: lawyers, merchants, owners of printing-plants and bookbinderies. They agreed on the following declaration:

| “In a lawsuit between Mr. Karl May and the heirs of Mr. |  
| Adalbert Fischer, the heirs of Mr. Fischer have declared that |  
| the novels by the author Karl May, published by the company |  
| of H.G. Muenchmeyer, have in the course of time been altered |  
| by means of additions and variations by a third party to such |  
| an extent that in their present form, they can no longer be |  
| regarded as Karl May’s creation. Mr. May has been authorised |  
| to publish this declaration. |

| “Dresden, October 1907.” |

This declaration is signed by the widow Mrs. Elisabeth Fischer, the merchant

Arthur Schubert, the owner of a printing-plant Otto Fischer, the owner of a bookbindery Alfred Sperling, the lawyer Trummler, the lawyer Bernstein, the lawyer Dr. Elb. Irresponsible people have pretended that this declaration had only been made by children and mentally incompetent persons. From this, you can also see with what kinds of weapons I am being attacked. But for me, the section of my Muenchmeyer trial dealing with Fischer has been closed by this. But the section dealing with Pauline Muenchmeyer still exists. I now have to turn to her in the following.

I even dare to start this section with the plan I found out from Fischer, which was:

| “May has been to prison. He has to keep this a secret. We |  
| have him in our hands. Two lines are enough, and he will be |  
| quiet. If he sues us, we will destroy him by publishing his |  
| prior convictions in all newspapers throughout Germany. What |  
| May has agreed upon with Muenchmeyer is irrelevant. What |  
| matters is, who will get the opportunity to testify under |  
| oath. And we will know how to make sure that May will not |  
| get this opportunity.” |

By no means, Fischer has only talked about this plan in private, but he also testified about this, putting it on record, and it had been incessantly confirmed in the course of the legal dispute, which now already lasts for nine years. I do not want to talk here about those things which the lawyer Dr. Gerlach, in the name of his client Pauline Muenchmeyer, has asserted and denied contrary to the truth. But he has portrayed me right from the start as a person who is to the highest

degree unqualified for taking the oath. I simply cannot list all those offensive swear-words here he has showered me with for as long as the last nine years and continues to do so without me being able to have him punished for this, because, as a lawyer, he is protected by the very same article of the law which forces me to put up with liberties from him which no other person would ever take. Being repeatedly admonished by the judges and asked to answer for himself by other lawyers, he nevertheless remains faithful to this speciality of his. To carry out the Muenchmeyers' plan, it was first of all necessary to obtain my criminal records. For this purpose an unfounded complaint for gross insult was issued, which was instantly retracted as soon as the purpose had been reached.

From that time on, more or less allusive notes appeared in the newspapers about my past. "I know even more!" one of them wrote; "You would know what I mean, wouldn't you, Mr. May?" another one asked. The "destruction" began. But the spiritus rector, the real perpetrator, always remained cleverly hidden in the shadows; he never showed himself; he always reached his ends through other persons. The area of his work reaches far beyond his professional duties, his correspondence is very extensive, concerning almost exclusively Karl May. He is in intimate contact with all of my literary opponents, and wherever a paper is writing about me, a letter by him or one of his confidants is sure to follow. And almost everywhere, they believe him. They believe him just as Cardauns used to believe this liar who told him so convincingly that the Muenchmeyer novels had been written by me precisely as they had been printed.

This gentleman Dr. Hermann Cardauns is inseparably connected with this very dark and very ugly chapter of the contemporary history of literature which is referred to as "KarlMay-persecution". He did not want to have it any other way. There, he stands in close union with people he otherwise does not belong to. This is also how he wanted it to be. His crushing style, his infallible way of choosing his words, his "abysmal" or "evident" pleonasm became a model for others, especially for those who construct those figurative nooses around my neck, to "whip me out of the German arts". But the entire conglomeration of what he has spoken and written in lectures and newspapers against me, constitutes by no means a sturdy column, which no one would be able to shake, but rather a paper kite in the shape of a dragon, compiled from lots of vague circumstantial evidence, the rope of which nobody wants to hold any more aside from Mr. Cardauns himself. It surely takes a lot of blind faith, to think like him

that my “indecencies”

could also be proven by other means than only by the presentation of my original manuscripts. Just making a lot of words will not do it; assertions will also remain unsuccessful, as long as they are not proven. Though there is a lot to be read in Cardauns’s essays against me about files, documents, and other evidence, he claims to possess proving my guilt, I have not yet been shown a single official file and no single document. As it seems, this gentleman owns an older printed copy by Muenchmeyer and a later edition by Fischer and presumes the first one to be a literal copy of my original. But I regard it as truly inconceivable that a “main or chief editor” could be thus mistaken. I am just too willing to consent that he has no idea what kinds of things are commonly practised by a notorious publisher of trash and colportage and what kind of a swindle this entire business is, but this does not excuse, but rather incriminate, him, because not knowing this, he also should not take the liberty of drawing conclusions from the reasoning of the filthy colportage which may only be drawn from the reasoning of honourable people. Fischer could only enjoy the tremendous success of the rewritten trashy novels thanks to the excessively loud roll of the drums of Mr.

Cardauns. Even the most incompetent politician knows that these kinds of things can only be killed by silence and not by gongs and tomtoms. But I, who was supposed to be struck dead by these tomtoms, these speeches and newspaper articles, have been rendered unable by this to remove this trash entirely from the face of this world as I had intended. My intentions were good; but since Mr.

Cardauns supported my opponents by keeping me from carrying out those intentions, he has done Muenchmeyer’s colportage a service, for which they will always think gratefully of him. During all of this long time until now, he has been their faithful champion; whether he had planned it this way or not, the effect remains the same.

The second champion for Muenchmeyer’s cause, ranking highly above the first one, even mentally, is the former social democrat Mr.

Rudolf Lebius in Charlottenburg, who had seceded from the Christian church. Concerning him, I will quote a passage from my written statements to the fourth criminal division of the Royal Superior Court III in Berlin:

In the year 1902, I was travelling in the South, and at the Lake Garda, the mail from home caught up with me, containing among others a letter by a certain Lebius, who described himself in a rather exuberant manner as a man who intimately knew and admired my work, and he made the request to be permitted to visit me at some time. This exuberance instantly arose my suspicion. "He wants money, nothing else", I said to myself. I replied to him that I was not at home and that I therefore was unable to invite him. In answer to this, he wrote to me on April the 7th, 1904: "Dear Sir!

"As early as one and a half years ago, I had attempted to get in contact with you, to which the enclosed card will serve as evidence. In the meantime, I have published a new newspaper, here, which has won great popularity. Could you be persuaded to write something for my paper? Something biographical perhaps, on the way you work, or on such details which might interest the German readership of Karl May. I would also like to interview you.

*"Withoutstanding admiration*

"Rudolf Lebius, publisher and editor."

So, Lebius had carefully kept my card all this time, to gain entrance into my house. He had signed his letter "with outstanding admiration". Again, I said to myself: "He only wants money." The assertion that his new newspaper had "won great popularity" was not the truth. I was to be lured in by this.

Such a visitor must not be turned away, especially when he comes armed with a newspaper, however small it may be, or else he will get even. Thus, I wrote to him that he would be allowed to come, and he answered on April the 28th:

"Many thanks for your kind letter. Of course, I am happy to accept your friendly

invitation. Unless you will give me another time, I will come to see you on Monday, May the 2nd, at three o'clock (departure at 3:31).

*“With great respect and admiration\_*

*“Rudolf Lebius.”*

He came. But I did not allow him to interview me. I did not put up with that. My wife, who had opened the door for him, had only showed him to me under the condition that absolutely nothing would be published. He gave his word on this, first to her and then also to me. He stayed for coffee, and he stayed until after dinner. He spoke very much; he spoke almost incessantly. I remained intentionally silent. I only said what was unavoidable.

I did not trust him, and, to be protected by a witness, I had invited the military author and editor Max Dittrich [a] for the same time, who conducted the conversation in my place.

[a] Julius Eduard Maximilian Dittrich (1844-1917) and Karl May had been to prison in Zwickau at the same time. Later, Dittrich worked as an editor in charge of articles on the military for several newspapers. He also wrote numerous books, mostly on military history.

Lebius drank much wine, while I only sipped. He became increasingly agitated, while I remained calm and circumspect. He tried very hard to convince me and my wife that he had the stuff it took to be a “real man”. This was his favourite expression, which he often used. Incessantly, he spoke about his principles, his views, his plans, about his great skillfulness, his ample experiences, and his excellent success as a journalist and an editor, as a publisher and a manager, as a leader of the flock and a tribune of the people.

This man attempted to impress us in a manner which only a quite ordinary, imprudent person would use, who is thus convinced of his own outstanding qualities, that he does not even consider that others might laugh about his conduct. When he saw that I did not respond to any of his tricks, his efforts became more desperate.

He had to convince me of his excellent qualities, at any price!

After all, he needed money, lots of money! And I seemed to be his final hope to get it! Therefore, in his financial angst, he revealed to us the most secret principles of his business and his way of life. Because of the large amount of wine, he believed he could win us over by this, but only affirmed our repulsion. Since I have to be brief here, I will only reproduce the three most important ones of these principles of his. These are: 1. Editors and journalists like us usually have no money.

Therefore, we also cannot afford the luxury of a personal opinion. We want to live. Therefore, we sell our services.

*Whoever pays the most, gets us!\_*

2. Every person has some dark spots on his character or in his life.

*Even every employer, every official, every policeman, \_*

*every judge or prosecutor has such a skeleton in his closet. \_*

These things have to be found out, wisely and clandestinely.

No difficulty may be a discouragement in this. And once it has been found out, the game is won. A note will then be placed in the newspaper, telling the person concerned that all is known, but in a manner so that he cannot sue. Then, he will be in our hands, and we can do with him as we please. He will surrender. In this manner I have already often worked to the benefit of my readers!

3. In a social respect, mankind can be divided into sheep and rams, masters and servants, those who command and those who obey. Whoever wants to stop being

a human member of the flock, *\_hastocast\_asidetheconscience\_oftheflock.\_* Once he does so, all who are still burdened by this conscience will come running after him. It does not matter at all which flock he might want to belong to. He can leave one and join another, he can switch sides. This does not hurt him. He only has to make sure that it is done with the necessary warmth and conviction, for this elates the crowd. If the social democrats do not follow him, the others will!

When the three of us heard these astonishing lessons, Max Dittrich burst out in rage several times; my wife was quiet with amazement; but I left the room to overcome my disgust! Thus, Lebius received neither money nor anything else from me. So, he came to realize that this unprecedented self-incrimination had not just been entirely in vain, but that by it he had also delivered himself into our hands. Now, the three of us were the most dangerous people there were for him. *Hecould\_neverallowusto*

*stateour\_case\_in\_court,\_* but rather had to do everything *to*

*portrayusasuntrustworthy\_persons,\_whohadno\_righttotestify\_*

*underoath.\_* It is very important to me to emphasise this in particular, for

| this is the only right key for all of his later actions, |

| which would hardly be understandable without this key, |

| because the hatred this man has against the three of us seems |

| to be almost inhuman. |

Even before he left on this night together with Max Dittrich, I had purposefully complained about the many letters in which I, not being a rich man at all, had been besieged with requests for money, and did so in a manner which had to keep any educated, honourable man from approaching me with similar wishes: As soon as the very next day, he wrote me the following letter: "Dresden-A., 5/3/04.



“Dear doctor!

“Cordially thanking you for the friendly reception and your hospitality, I am asking you, in case you should visit the art exhibit or should happen to come to Dresden on another occasion, to have lunch or coffee with us.

“In one respect, I have to go back on the agreement we reached yesterday. I cannot accept your offer to work for us free of charge. We will pay ten pfennig per line, which would be the same price you are likely to have received from other newspapers.

“What you have told me yesterday, I have considered one more today. It would seem to me that in spite of the colossal sales of your works, the profit could still be increased extensively. My experiences as a bookseller and publisher have taught me that the value of properly managed propoganda and direct advertisement cannot be overestimated at all.

“My wife and I send our regards to your wife and you with *admiration* and *gratitude*, yours truly “Rudolf Lebius.”

Let me point out that he addressed me as “doctor”, though, during his visit, I had, and not just once, made clear to him that he should refrain from doing so. But he did not do so, for, after all, this title was serve him as a weapon against me!

At about this time, Max Dittrich wrote a booklet about me and my work. He was so imprudent to show the manuscript to Lebius. The latter came rushing to Radebeul right away, to ask me to use my influence on Dittrich that he should let him, Mr. Lebius, publish this work. It goes entirely without saying that he and his request were rejected, and I wrote to Mr. Max Dittrich that I would never want to see him again, if he would consider letting this man have the booklet.

This second visit of Mr. Lebius took at most ten minutes. After he was gone, I was missing a photograph, he had stolen from me.

He was never allowed to return again. Nevertheless, he had repeatedly pretended to have been a guest at my house at numerous occasions and to have studied me very carefully.

The next day he wrote to me:

“Dresden-A., 7/12/04

34 Fuerstenstrasse.

“Dear doctor!

*“I would very much like to publish Dittrich’s booklet and would  
also make the greatest effort to put it in wide circulation.”*

But on account of my resignation from the ‘Sachsenstimme’ <Voice of Saxony>  
- officially I will not be leaving my job until the first of October of this year - I  
have become a bit short on capital.

*“Would you perhaps grant me a loan for three years at 5 percent?”*

Perhaps, I will pay the debt back to you as early as one year from now.

| “To show my gratitude for this, I would promote the booklet |

| in such a way that the whole world would talk about it. |

| After all, I am particularly experienced in this area. |

“Things will work out with my newspaper, and even on a very solid basis. Now  
it is up to me to work and to show *that I have the*

*stuff it takes to be a real man etc. etc.* Best regards to your wife

“Yours truly

Rudolf Lebius.”

I did not answer. I was of the opinion that a man with honour could not proceed after such a silence, especially since I had *totally rejected Lebius concerning the booklet.* But on August the 8th, he nevertheless wrote again: “On the 4th of this month, I have become the sole proprietor of the “Sachsenstimme” at favourable conditions. I can now act as I please. To gain some independence from the printer, *I would*

*like to take a loan of a few thousand marks (3 to 6) for half a*

*year.* There is no risk involved. The Jewish interested businesses are behind me, who have, as the past season has shown, supported me to a large extent. The Christmas sales will give me the money to pay you back.

*Would you grant me this loan? I am*

*very willing to do something for you in return.* The large number of academic employees allows my paper to rise above the majority of Saxonian newspapers. We are furthermore able to send those articles, you might have an interest in, to 300 or more German and Austrian newspapers and highlight the article concerned in blue.

Something like this will infallibly have its effect. In Dresden, I am sending my paper to all public bars (1760). Most sincerely Rudolf Lebius.”

At the same time, I found out that Lebius owned nothing at all, but had taken the oath of manifestation [a], that he had not paid the printer of his paper, that he quite generally had nothing but debts, and that he even owed royalties. That his newspaper had a solid basis, was untrue, the same thing goes for the “large number of academic employees” and other things. Intentional deceptions like this ought to be brought before the public prosecutor. Let me draw your attention to how he starts and ends his letters: “Dear Sir ... With outstanding admiration!”

“With great respect and admiration!” “Dear doctor ... With admiration and gratitude.”

When he saw that this flattery failed to do its effect, he did not write to me any more, but to Dittrich. He did so on August the 15th, 1904:

[a] This oath forces a debtor to disclose all of his possessions.

A debtor who refuses to take this oath can be sent to prison.

“Dear Mr. Dittrich!

“I will give you one percent for negotiating the loan. *Idonot needmore\_than\_10.000\_marks.\_* But I would also make do with less.

I will sent you your fee on the 20th of this month as agreed.

“Couldn’t you *USEYOUR\_PERSUASION\_* on doctor May to pay me an advance?”

“Friendly greetings R. Lebius.”

Then, on August the 27th:

“Dear Mr. Dittrich!

“My wife is going to see Dr. Klenke on September the 1st, to get a small amount he owes us. She will use this opportunity to pay you your royalties. You have my written promise that I will give you 1 percent of the money which I will obtain from H.V. or Dr. M.

(May) on account of your intervention. You will receive the money right away  
... .

“Friendly greetings Lebius.”

This refers to the fact that he owed Max Dittrich royalties in the amount of 37 marks and 45 pfennigs, which he, though this amount was very small, was unable to pay. As a consequence of this, a mirror has been seized from his house by the court. When he received an order to pay the 37 marks and 45 from Dittrich instead of my 10.000 marks, he wrote to him on September the 3rd:  
“Dear Mr. Dittrich!

“I have urged Mr. Klenke M.D. to pass the amount of 40 marks from my account to you. Your behaviour towards me strikes me as most peculiar, perhaps even insulting.

“Sincerely

R. Lebius.”

But this Dr. Klenke also never considered paying the debts of Mr.

Lebius, and thus it was only logical and consequential that on September the 7th,

the following threat reached me in the form of a postcard:

“Dear Sir!

“A certain Mr. Lebius, editor of the ‘Sachsenstimme’, has told another gentleman that he was writing an article against you. I have just overheard it in a restaurant. A friend is warning you of this man.

“B.”

Of course, I was instantly fully aware of the author and the purpose of this card. The report of the court’s *sworn* experts\_

also states *\_that nobody but Lebius, in his own hand, could have\_*

*written it.* Obviously, he quite definitely expected me to pay the 10.000 marks in response to this extortion. If I would not pay up, I could not just be sure of the vengeful article he threatened to write now, but even of more of the kind and other things as well; this had to worry me. But even now, I did not respond and was facing the unavoidable article with a clear conscience, which appeared on September the 11th, 1904, in number 33 of Lebius’s paper, the “Sachsenstimme”, and bore the triple headline:

| “More light on Karl May |

| 160.000 marks income for a novelist |

| A famous author of colportage from Dresden.” |

This man had given his word to my wife and me, not to publish anything. He had even only been admitted to our house after having made this promise, and now he nevertheless published something, and in what manner and for what reasons! He turned everything upside down; he twisted everything! He put all the words he pleased into our mouths and kept to himself what we had actually said, to avoid exposing himself to ridicule. This text contains more than 70 immoralities, twists of the facts, and direct lies. But this was only the beginning; the continuations followed soon enough. This article in number 33 of the "Sachsenstimme" had been written in such a manner that Lebius was still able to turn around, if I should now finally give him the money. And already in number 34 there came a very clear hint, telling me what would happen, if I could not be moved to pay.

This hint consisted of an advertisement by Muenchmeyer, which spoke volumes to me. You ought to know that the proprietor of Muenchmeyer's business had told me: "The publication of the other novels doesn't hurt you too much yet; but as soon as I'm done with the 'Lost Son' and start placing advertisement for it, you'll be lost! This one will be such a blow that you'll be unable to continue existing as an author after this!" And this "Lost Son"

had now been advertised for in number 34 of the "Sachsenstimme".

This was just as if they had written to me in gigantic letters: "But now, finally, surrender the money, or it will go on in this style!" The most dangerous extortionist is he who goes about his business in this cunning manner, which is even more clear than a spoken word, but is beyond the reach of any public prosecutor.

But I nevertheless did not pay anything. Then, in number 44, there came a second elaboration, in number 46 a third, and in number 47 a fourth. In number 46 the connection of Mr. Lebius with Muenchmeyer's business was demonstrated more clearly to me than before, for it said that the owner of this business had a large stack of old letters, written by me, in his possession and could therefore give very detailed information on me, if he only wanted. But the truth was that he did not possess a single old letter from me; I, on the other hand, knew now precisely that Lebius had taken on the job of executing the Muenchmeyers' plan "to destroy me in the eyes of all of Germany by publishing my prior convictions in all the newspapers". I was convinced that the payment of those 10.000 marks would silence him right away, but I would have been



ashamed to look into the mirror, if I had given him even a single pfennig.

As I had thought, so it happened: Already in number 48, there came without any provocation, out of the blue, the announcement: “The four years which Mr. Karl May had been sentenced to spend in Waldheim were, according to our information, the consequence of the burglary of a watchmaker’s shop.” But I have never committed any burglary. You see, that they did not care about the truth, but only about “destroying”. This number 48 was published on Christmas Eve. At this time, posters were displayed in the windows of book-stores of Dresden, announcing the “Sachsenstimme”

with these large, red letters: “*The prior conviction of Karl*

*May*”. There could not be a more striking evidence that this was not about literature, but rather the execution of perfectly despicable intentions! Therefore, let me put an end to this cruel show here. I cannot bring myself to listing all these so very great deeds of Mr. Lebius in detail. I only want to say in summary that he proceeded in this manner, until, after some time, he had to flee from Dresden. I have compiled the lies, he has spread about me in his articles from his time in Dresden, to prove them in court. In spite of the brief time, there are not less than 142 of them. There probably never was another human being who has surpassed this! But I am explicitly emphasising that this list, by no means, contains everything, but rather only a selection. I could more than double this number, though it is already very high. I have remained silent on this issue for a long time, until I could not bear it any longer. Once this time had come, I finally had to defend myself. I filed a complaint with the public prosecutor’s office for extortion. I submitted his letters, and the threatening postcard from September the 7th, 1904, as well. The experts declared that it necessarily must have been Lebius who had written it. But the above mentioned office was of the opinion that this was insufficient to start an investigation. And Lebius did his best in all of his statements to portray me as a person who deserved no credibility. The definite proof of his skillfulness in this he had given by reporting to the royal prosecutor’s office in Dresden that the owner of the hotel on the Mount Sinai had been in Dresden and had been talking very badly about me. And yet, everyone knows that up to this day there has never been a hotel on the Mount Sinai! I guess, this sufficiently proves that the creativity of this Mr.

Lebius stops at nothing. Twice, I filed a private lawsuit against him. One of them was retracted by me during the proceedings, merely because I was so disgusted with all the filth I had to deal with there. The other one got him a fine of 30 marks at the first instance; but he was acquitted in the appeal, because my lawyer had become ill and sent a replacement, who argued the case without being fully informed.

This is all I have done against the attacks of Mr. Lebius, which were just as numerous as they were incessant. This was surely little enough! That I answered to reporters whenever they came to ask me, goes without saying. It would be asking too much from me to demand that I should lie to these gentlemen out of fear of Mr.

Lebius. Nevertheless, he still pretends up to this day that it was not me who is pursued and assaulted by him, but rather him by me.

Even after he had fled from Dresden, leaving behind a rather sizeable amount of debts, his attacks against me did not stop.

Let me just mention the article in the Austrian teachers'

magazine, by which he stirred up about 40.000 teachers to join in the campaign against me. I kept silent. I even kept silent, when in Wilhelm Bruhn's magazine "Wahrheit" <Truth> in Berlin, he published a perfectly outrageous assault against me, in which he branded me as an "atavistic criminal", who had been, for almost one decade, in prisons and penitentiaries on account of "continued burglaries"! There, he asserted that I had suffered through a serious, chronic disease, which had "obviously an antisocial"

effect. With this, he had started to continue his machinations against me in Berlin, which had been interrupted in Dresden.

Unfortunately, I had been compelled to meet with him there in person, because there was an unavoidable question, which I had to pose to him in connection with the extensive lawsuit against the Muenchmeyers. For this purpose, I went to Berlin with my wife.

We discovered his apartment. He were told that he was publishing a new paper, called “Bund” <alliance, union>. We telephoned him.

He told us to meet him at the Cafe Bauer. We followed his instruction. He came with his wife and her sister. He did not answer my question. He denied everything. I told him that I would like to see his new paper. I meant this in a perfectly honest and good way, without any evil intentions. But he instantly got into a fit of rage and asked threateningly: “Are you up to something? If so, I’ll proceed against you once again without delay! Here in Berlin, there are more than twenty papers like the ‘Dresdener Rundschau’. They are all at my command, if I should decide to destroy you! Here, this won’t take long at all!”

I answered that I would not think of descending back into the old filth. My wife said to his wife in a calm and friendly manner that it was the most beautiful duty of married women to work towards reconciliation and to soften the harshness of life; then we left.

This was on September the 2nd or 3rd. *Onemonth\_later,* on October the 1st, the following letter arrived from Berlin; I was away travelling:

“Dear Sir!

“Though you would not know me, I would like to take the liberty of asking you, whether you could give me any more detailed information on a certain Mr. Lebius, formerly a resident of Dresden. The above mentioned gentleman, a former social democrat, has filed a private suit for gross insult against me, in my capacity as the former editor in charge of the ‘Vorwaerts’ [a].

In court, I will have to demonstrate what a ‘honourable gentleman’

Mr. Lebius is. On account of an advice by an colleague from Dresden, I am now turning to you with every confidence, that you might perhaps be able to give me

any kind of information about this gentleman. If this should be the case, I am looking forward to your kind response, which would very much oblige me.

“Most sincerely

Carl Wermuth, Editor of the ‘Vorwaerts’.”

[a] “Vorwaerts” <Go forward!>: The newspaper of the social democratic party.

I repeat that I was travelling and was therefore unable to grant this wish, even if I had wanted to. On April the 5th, 1908, this was

*a full half year later,*

I received another letter from the editor’s office of the “Vorwaerts”:

“*We regret that you have not spoken out yet regarding the accusations against you by Lebius, or respectively that you have not supplied us with the necessary evidence on the slanderous acts of Lebius in respect to you. As I have been told by my colleague Wermuth, your wife has informed us that you were currently travelling and that you were unable to supply us with*

*the desired material against Lebius.* I am hoping that you have returned from your journey in the meantime and that you will now ... .”

I guess, this sufficiently proves *that it is not me who is*

*pursuing Mr. Lebius, but that he is pursuing me.* Mr. Lebius pretends that I had approached him at that time on the anniversary of the battle of Sedan [a] to be able to assist the “Vorwaerts”.

Hereby, I am proving that I did not know anything about this complaint for gross insult at this time yet, but rather that the “Vorwaerts” only informed me about it one month later and *did*

*noteven\_receive\_an\_answer\_* to this after another six months had passed! Thus, I had spared Mr. Lebius for a full six month, though it had been made so convenient and easy for me by the social democratic party to get my revenge against him. *\_ThatIdo\_*

*notpursue\_him,\_but\_am,\_againandagain,\_being\_forced\_by\_himto*

*actin\_self\_defence,\_* is, by the way, also proven by the fact that I have avoided up to this day to testify as a witness against him. The situation concerning this testimony in favour of the editor of the “Vorwaerts” had been like this: [a] September the 2nd.

Lebius had sued the “Vorwaerts” for gross insult, and the “Vorwaerts” had named me as a witness, of course without bothering to ask me first. Lebius was told by his conscience that he could probably not expect many kind words from this witness. Yes, the thought even occurred to him that I had already known about my role as a witness when we met at the Cafe Bauer. This enraged him. He sent his wife to my wife to Radebeul, to make threats against me. My wife wished this meeting to take place in my house; but Mrs. Lebius refused. The two women met at the restaurant of our railroad-station. There, Mrs. Lebius wanted to dictate to us, instructed by her husband, what and how I had to testify as a witness. In particular, I was supposed to declare in court that he had not written that threatening postcard of September the 7th in Dresden. If I did not do this, he would have to start the old fight against me anew. My wife rejected all of this most decisively, for we were now more convinced than ever that he was its author. Thus, his wife returned to Berlin, without having accomplished her mission.

Once Lebius had realized that this attempt had failed, he decided to render me unfit to testify under oath, and he planned to do so by means of a pamphlet, which had to be published soon enough before the appointed time when I was supposed to appear as a witness. But since this pamphlet, in order to be able to

have its effect, had to be written in such a manner which absolutely inevitably had to be followed by a criminal prosecution of the author, which Lebius did not want to bring on himself, he looked around for a man to act as a front, who did not know him and Karl May yet and was sufficiently inexperienced, gullible, and in need of cash to get involved in this, for a few hundred marks, which would quite certainly lead to a prison sentence for him, without even suspecting anything. He found him in the shape of certain Mr. F.W. Kahl from Basel, pulled him into his web, and spun such a network of self-praise and lies around him, that this young, perfectly honest man almost considered it to be an honour to be allowed to put himself into the service of such an important, mentally, socially, and also in legal matters so very outstanding man.

Lebius, as he generally and always did, approached this matter, too, in an extraordinarily clever and cunning manner. In the beginning, he did not mention that it was *solely* a pamphlet against *me*. He let the young man believe that he was supposed to write a SCIENTIFIC work on famous, or rather infamous, men. He gave him their names; my name was also among them. But when Kahl went to his work and received his instructions on a daily basis, these were to the effect that, one after another, all of these “famous and infamous” men disappeared, until Karl May was the only one left. And the “scientific” work was to turn into a pamphlet of the very lowest and most dangerous kind. Kahl realised this with every day more and more clearly. He started to suspect that, under the cover of perfect kindness, he was to be led to his doom.

When he told Mr. Lebius straight out what he suspected, Lebius thought the best thing would be to confess the entire purpose of the pamphlet to him. He admitted to the following: | Lebius has sued the editor of the “Vorwaerts” for gross |

| insult. |

| The “Vorwaerts” has named Karl May as a witness against |

| Lebius. |

| Therefore, it is necessary for Lebius to destroy Karl May. |

| In order to achieve this, he will publish this pamphlet, he |  
| currently working on. |

| The appointed time for Karl May's testimony is in the |  
| beginning of April. |

| Therefore, it is absolutely imperative that the pamphlet will |  
| be ready for distribution by April the 1st. |

| If the pamphlet should only be ready by a later date, it |  
| would be useless; in this case, he would not have to bother |  
| writing it at all. |

| It will be sent to the newspapers, which will report about |  
| it. This shall influence the judges. |

| It will also be presented to the judges directly. As soon as |  
| this will happen, May will be ruined as a witness. |

When the honest, young man heard this, his scruples became even greater than they had been before. When he said so and expressed his worries of being punished in court, Lebius suggested the following to him:

| As authors, we are anyhow and always with one foot in prison. |

| To have been sentenced in court, is good advertising for us. |

| I also have already been convicted many times. |

| You have no reason at all to be afraid of the courts. You |

| have no prior convictions, you may testify under oath. But |

| May may not testify under oath. |

| May is under police supervision. He has been forbidden to |

| live in a city. Therefore, he lives in Radebeul. |

| I HAVE A GREAT TALENT FOR DEALING WITH THE COURTS. ONCE I |

| START TALKING, THE JUDGES ARE ALL ON MY SIDE! |

| WHEN A PERSON IN A TRIAL WRITES SUCH A PAMPHLET, THIS  
MAKES |

| AN ENORMOUS IMPRESSION ON THE JUDGES! |



| Mrs. May has begged me with tears in her eyes to have mercy |

| on her husband. |

| May has to be destroyed by this pamphlet. All the rest is |

| unessential, ONLY THERE TO CONCEAL THE TRUE PURPOSE! |

The consequence of these and similarly peculiar verbal expectorations was that Kahl decided, to distance himself from this matter. He prohibited Lebius to print anything he had written or even to abuse his name for this pamphlet. He directed the very same ban also against the publisher. He thought that by such means he had ascended quite definitely back out of this morass. But he did not know Lebius and his audacity yet. The pamphlet was published, and even precisely on April the 1st. Its title was:

| KARL MAY, |

| one who corrupts the German youth |

by

| F.W. Kahl - Basel. |

Kahl only found out from a Swiss newspaper that the pamphlet had nevertheless been published, and even under his name. He instantly took the appropriate steps. The appointed hearing, when I was to be questioned as a witness, which Lebius had been so afraid of, had not taken place. Whether he had nevertheless presented the pamphlet to the judges or not, I do not know. But he has, without delay, sent them to the newspapers, and even with summaries and commentaries

etc., the slanderous nature of which you can get an idea of by just reading the following lines, which he has sent to the “Neue Zuericher Zeitung” <New Newspaper of Zuerich>:

“Mr. May has waged his revenge against me by undermining my financial position by means of slander and driving my into bankruptcy. As soon as I had established myself in another town, he again appeared on the scene, the repeat the same manoeuvre. In doing so, before striking another blow against me, he loves to visit me at my apartment and to beg, with tears in his eyes, for peace.”

This is not the place for me to talk about the contents of this pamphlet. It goes entirely without saying that my prior convictions had been listed, and even more than these. He distributed this all over the place, to “destroy” me according to the Muenchmeyers’ method. I obtained an injunction against it.

It was no longer allowed to be printed and to be distributed. And I filed a private complaint for gross insult against him. This complaint could not be trailed in court, because my lawyer had lost all of my evidence, and these were far more than a hundred items. They were only found again with him, after it had already been too late. So, I was forced to agree with the suggestions for a settlement, which the presiding judge had made. Lebius took back all of his accusations against me, the material as well as the formal ones, stated that he regretted his attacks against me, and promised to leave me alone from now on. He did so with his signature. It was impossible for me not to believe in such a promise, given in court. And yet, it was a betrayal and an unconscientious act beyond comparison of his, to make this promise to me, for he could only make it  
*\_withtheintentionofbreaking\_*

*it.* This was because he had contacted with my ex-wife. She felt, as all ex-wives do most of the time, unreasonably resentful against her ex-husband; he was planning on using this for his purposes. He came to see her in Weimar, where she lived. There, she lived calmly and contently of her alimony of 3000 marks, which I payed her, though I did not have to give her anything, because she had been the only guilty party. I had also amply supplied her with all conceivable things. Then, this man came to her and got all the bitterness, she had worked

herself into, out of her, to fabricate out of this, supplemented with his own additions and distortions, a rope to hang me with. He promised her just as sacredly and solemnly as he once promise it to me, that nothing, nothing at all would be published, but straight away, he went to write for the edition of his “Bund” from March the 28th, 1909, an article under the headline: “A spiritistic writing medium as the main witness of the editors of the `Vorwaerts’”. With this alleged writing medium he was referring to my current wife.

It is a perfectly unbelievable filth, which is there being hurled against me and my current wife, and even by cunningly using and adapting the embittering agents, which exist in the emotional state of ex-wives. When the poor, unfortunate woman read this, she was shocked. So he did not keep silent! He had not kept his word! She instantly rushed to him to Berlin, to make him answer for himself. Once she was there, he had her stay. He turned her over to his brother-in-law Heinrich Medem, a former lawyer and notary, who, together with him, became her counsel. At first, they both persuaded her to give up her 3000 marks of alimony, and then forced her to pawn her valuables, for this would “give a better impression to others”. This rather means that other people were supposed to think that I was the one who had plunged this woman into such poverty and such misery! Lebius has literally admitted this in his letter to the concert-singer Mrs. vom Scheidt, which is the object of the current private lawsuit, and the presiding judge at the first instance has praised him by saying in public: “That’s very noble of you!”

Lebius had promised this woman, now that she had lost all of her income and was facing a desolate future, to pay her 100 marks a month for the rest of her life, Lebius with whom even attempts to repossess his belongings for debts of two or three marks had been futile! At first, she believed him; but he knew just too well that this promise was not legally binding. It was all nothing but a bombastic show! She borrowed 500 marks from acquaintances, to be able to live. But he gave her, little by little, only 200

marks, but by no means as a gift, only borrowed, for when he realised that she was distancing herself from him and sought to be closer to me again, he threatened her to sue her for the payment of 300 marks on account of these 200

marks.

And what did she get out of rejecting all of her income, throwing herself into filthy misery and worry, abandoning her nice, well-arranged conditions, even selling or pawning her jewelry?

Nothing, nothing at all besides from becoming the tool for the revenge of Mr. Lebius, being trained like an animal by him to think, speak, and write about me precisely as he pleased, and being in every respect entirely at the mercy of him and Medem, his brother-in-law. For when I was forced, due to the article in the “Bund” mentioned above, to sue my ex-wife, Lebius and Medem designed her written statements so that only Lebius benefited from them for his attacks against me, and she had to sign things in the process the purpose and implications of which she did not even suspect! There had been times, when, in tears, she refused to sign such a statement. But she was nevertheless forced to do it!

Until finally, she came around to the realisation that things could not possibly go on in this direction and in this manner, if she would not want to be completely ruined! She turned to me and asked for forgiveness. I took pity on the poor, manipulated woman. I retracted the criminal charges and the complaint for gross insult against her. And now, I found out in what a cunning manner she had been lured by Lebius out of her safe, calm position over to him, to be economically destroyed and morally exploited, or rather to be used against me with the aim of mutual ruin. He said his letter, which is the object of this current lawsuit: |  
“Being advised to do so by my lawyer, I have indeed demanded, |

| in regard to my settlement of the lawsuit with May, that Mrs. |

| Emma should first pawn a part of her jewelry, for this gives |

| a better impression to others.” |

So, because I have settled my lawsuit with him, because he has apologised in court to me for his insults, and because he had promised in court to leave me alone from now on and forever, so therefore, “in regard to this”, my wife now

had to pawn her valuables, so that *I* would be referred to as the scoundrel, by whom she had been driven into such a wretched existence! What is the word for such a behaviour? And after he had, in such a manner, caused her to lose all of her former income and her jewelry, he writes in this letter of his: "I have also instructed my syndic, Privy Councillor Mr. Ueberhorst, to prepare steps for me *to get my money back!*" \_ Could there be any expression by means of which the train of Lebius's thoughts and the manner of his actions would be comprehensively characterised?

This poor woman, who has, in almost every respect, been completely stripped of all she had by Lebius, was by no means the first or only divorcee, he got into his power to achieve his purposes. It is rather a very particular tactical habit of his, to pit ex-wives against their husbands. The most striking example of this is the case of Max Dittrich. Mentioning it here only briefly, I am asking you to pay *particular attention* to it, because it is *of*

*the utmost importance* for the evaluation of Mr. Lebius.

As you already know, when this gentleman visited me, I had invited the editor and military author Max Dittrich to join me as a witness, since I was suspicious and cautious, to be protected against possible upcoming lies and swindles on Mr. Lebius's part by a fully credible witness. Mr. Dittrich had been present that day, from the beginning to the end, and had heard every word I had said. To have such a witness, became, as time moved on, more and more embarrassing and dangerous for Mr. Lebius. He therefore decided *to render him unfit to take the oath,* the very same thing he has also done to me *and is still doing today.* This is, as will be demonstrated later, *a personal trick* of his, which regards *as infallible* - - - rendering a person unfit to testify!

In this, he adheres to the principle he elaborated to us at his visit: Every person, every policeman and judge, every official has a skeleton in his closet, is guilty of something he has to keep secret. This has to be *discovered* and *put into the*

*newspaper*; this is the way to achieve domination and to be known as someone

who has the energy it takes to be a “*realman*”.\_

Lebius did so here as well. The first wife of Max Dittrich had died; he had divorced his second wife; now his nervous system had become severely ill due to a ship-wreck, in which he just barely escaped death, sustaining dangerous injuries. This presented itself as highly interesting material, which simply had to yield something! So, Mr. Lebius ventured forth to look for the “skeleton in the closet”, the “secret” guilt and sin. He searched everywhere, by means of letters, conversations, personal visits.

Wherever he thought he could find out something, he came to call.

He did not even have the decency to except Dittrich’s relatives.

Sneakily, he obtained access to Dittrich’s old sister-in-law, Dittrich’s nephews and nieces, and even Dittrich’s second wife, who had remarried and led a happy, quiet marital life. He drew everything out of them, without them even suspecting why and what for. They answered trustingly and without reservations. But when he suddenly, giving them quite a shock with it, dropped the words “court” and “oath”, they felt the clutches they had fallen into.

They were unable to say anything bad and asked him to leave them out of it. He promised it to them. Dittrich’s second wife felt especially uneasy about the prospect of being dragged into the filth of Lebius. Her present husband was a kind and good gentleman, but unrelenting in regard to the very strict ideas he had in respect to his “honour”. For his wife to be on Lebius’s side in *such* an affair, would necessarily have brought on the most severe consequences for him and her! So, she asked Lebius not to involve her in this under any circumstances, and did not shy away from giving her his most sacred promise. But then he went about his business as fast as he could and published in number 12 of his “Sachsenstimme” a report, of which I am only going to quote a few points, which are not even the worst: “Max Dittrich had no children from his first wife, but two from his stepdaughter, before she was even 16 years old.”

“The grief over her husband’s immorality was what killed his wife.”

“Though his second wife was very tolerant, Dittrich finally went to such extremes, that a divorce became inevitable.”

“For several years, he had an affair with his wife’s niece, who was 16 years old and lived in the same house.”

“Then, he started an affair with a young girl.”

“His wife had him watched by an detective agency.”

“During the divorce proceedings, Dittrich lived with his lover and also had his daughter with him.”

“Now, he is partially an invalid due to a severe, syphilitic neurological disease”  
*etc.*

You can imagine how shocked his relatives had been, once they had read this and were summoned as witnesses to appear in court, because, most naturally, Max Dittrich had sued Mr. Lebius! The niece had to be questioned at home; she was ill and confined to her bed. Dittrich’s ex-wife, in her mental anguish, went to see the judge and told him honestly that this disgusting matter would be absolute murder against the happiness of her present marriage, having hardly any chance to survive this. This outstanding gentleman did not have solely the law in his mind, but in addition also a human heart in his chest and dealt with the interrogation in an accordingly humane manner.

Even if we were to suppose that all of the items listed by Lebius were based on facts, every more or less educated and not entirely brutish person would surely have to ask himself, whether the publication of such things was *permissible* according to the *law* or the *moralcodex\_ofthepress*. I am convinced that everyone, except for Lebius, will answer “No!” to this question.

Though this would, at any rate, suffice to characterise this gentleman, it is not by a long shot all of it, for if someone would take the time to look through the files of Dittrich versus Lebius, he would, in the end of these, see yet another light being shed on Mr. Lebius. This is because there he confesses that his slander against Max Dittrich

*hadnotbeentru*,\_

and declares that he was willing to pay the costs of the trial!

I believe, this is all one has to know to be now fully acquainted with this gentleman.

Whether someone jumps out from behind a bush and murders another person, or whether he bumps off people from the columns of an uncivilised newspaper as often as he pleases, the legislation of the future will surely have to regard and to treat this so very differently than nowadays. And yet, there are, thank God, already in this time some authorities of a high mind and of mankind’s ethos, who regard the killing of a human *soul* as at least just as punishable as the murder of a human *body*.

On March the 27th, 1905, Lebius had hurled the accusations listed above in his “Sachsenstimme” against Max Dittrich, and on the following November the 18th, he declared to the second criminal division of the Royal Superior Court of Dresden, as it has been recorded:

| “I declare that I hereby retract the insulting statements, |



| which I have made against the plaintiff in the issue of the |  
| `Sachsenstimme' from March the 27th, 1905, |  
| !!! as untrue !!! |  
| and that I am expressing my regret concerning the statements |  
| made in the `Sachsenstimme' and that I am therefore |  
| !!! asking the plaintiff for his forgiveness !!!” |

Then, when a few years later, Lebius started an argument and lawsuits with the “Vorwaerts” in Berlin, they listed the military author Dittrich as a witness against him. Instantly, Lebius resorted to his well-known trick, to eliminate witnesses by means of the press. He once again published precisely the same things he had, at that other time, published about Dittrich and than retracted before the Superior Court of Dresden | !!! as untrue, !!! |

begging for forgiveness. Dittrich was therefore forced to sue him again and to point out this retraction and plea for forgiveness.

What did Lebius do? He declared in his written statement to the Royal Inferior Court of Charlottenburg from December the 24th, 1909, that, at that time, he had only made this apology and this confession of the untruthfulness of his statements | “for reasons of an economic nature”. |

His conditions had been thus tight at this time that he could not afford to travel to Dresden to attend the trial. Thus, he personally is the one who is drawing the following moral portrait of himself:

| In 1905, Lebius defames the military author Dittrich in his |  
| paper, published in Dresden. |

| In 1905, Lebius declares to the Superior Court of Dresden |  
| that these defamations were all lies and asks for |  
| forgiveness. |

| In 1909, Lebius publishes in his Berliner paper these |  
| defamations, he had described as lies, once again, as if they |  
| were the truth. |

| In 1909, Lebius declares in his written statement to the |  
| Inferior Court of Charlottenburg that he had previously lied |  
| to the Superior Court of Dresden. |

And why this tangle of lies in court! And how is it possible for a human being, who would have to possess some sense of honour and shame, to declare himself in court as a liar and then to describe this declaration also as a lie? He himself has given us the answer to this question: He was in a tight situation; | ! ! ! he had no money ! ! ! |

So, when Lebius has no money, this is a perfectly sufficient reason for him  
*tolietojudgesandcourt\_authorities\_andto*

*presenthis\_character\_in\_suchawaythatno\_cautious\_person\_*

*couldever\_believe\_anything\_he\_says\_again!\_*

I could continue for hours to talk about Lebius in this manner.

But for the purposes I want to achieve today, what I have said up to here will suffice. I had made notes of the lies, Lebius had spread about me, not all of them, but only the most striking ones.

By now, there are *morethan\_five\_hundred,* I can prove him guilty of in court. In the last three weeks alone, he has served me with four complaints for gross insult, though I had nothing whatsoever to do with these insults. This is what is commonly called an execution! And in all this, he always insists, as I have already mentioned, most expressly that I am the one pursuing him, not him pursuing me. In response to his many, terrible articles from the years 1904 and 1905, I have only sought assistance once from the public prosecutor's office and twice from the courts. After this, I have kept silent to all of his further attacks, until he forced me by means of the alleged Kahl-pamphlet, to defend myself, because I *\_wastobe\_* "destroyed *\_intheeyes\_ofthejudges\_*". And even in this case, I have forgiven him, settled the matter with him, retracted my complaint in return for his promise to leave me alone from then on, though the judge in charge said, that Lebius would have to face *asevere\_punishment\_* if it got to trial. See the court files 20 B. 254 08/34, signed Schenk, Nauwerk. I bore it, when Lebius, in spite of his promise in court to leave me alone from then on, manipulated my ex-wife against me, exploiting her, depriving her of her income and her jewelry, *andalmost\_*

*reducedhertobeggary.* She had been lured by him into taking steps in courts against me, which almost have to be described as insane. And in doing so, he had the guts to pretend in the first instance of the current trial for gross insult, | "that he had represented her interests and could therefore |

| claim protection according to article 193 [a]!" |

[a] I do not know how this law might have changed in the last 90

years. In its current version, article 193 of the German penal code states that certain insulting statements are only punishable, if the insult consists in the form, not the contents of the statement. Among others, these kinds of statements are those made to defend a right or to protect a valid interest.

Never before, a greater lie has been uttered than this one! By manipulating Mrs. Pollmer, Lebius has only pursued his own private interests concerning the lawsuits, *\_whiletheinterestsofthis\_*

*poorwomanwerecoffously\_trampled\_upon\_by\_him.\_* It is an outrage that, to top it all off, he even demands the protection of article 193 for this!

The newspapers have repeatedly described him as a person “to whom the lives of others mean nothing in the pursuit of his goals”. My ex-wife had even used another, extremely bad word instead of “person”, without him daring to hold her responsible for this in court. Whether this accusation is true, or whether it is an exaggeration, I could prove with many examples; but I only want to give this one: After the trial in Charlottenburg on April the 12th of this year, which had been completely misrepresented in the newspapers’ reports, the “Boston American” in Boston, Massachusetts, published the following note, which had been sent to them from Berlin:

“Author of pious books, a bandit. Berlin - - - Mr. Charles May, the millionaire, philanthropist, author of pious books, and an outstanding personality of Germany, has today been branded by a jury as the perpetrator of many, serious crimes, committed in the mountainous area of southern Saxony, where, 40 years ago, he led a gang of robbers. *Maycollapsedandwas\_placed\_underthe*

*\_protectionofhis\_friends,toprevent\_him\_from\_committing\_*

*suicide* etc.” To make up such monstrous distortions of the truth, in order to “destroy” me, this does surely constitute a disrespect for the lives of others, or does it not? But let this be enough on this Mr. Lebius. The place for all the rest is the court, but not here. To let my readers see things clearly, there is only one more fact to be stated: Muenchmeyer’s lawyer Dr.

Gerlach is his lawyer as well, and both are giving each other help and assistance to the largest possible extent. There are two more extremely interesting champions for Muenchmeyer’s cause I have to mention, who, though in respect

to their intelligence, neither of them comes close to Gerlach or Lebius, nevertheless leave a striking impression as god-fearing, Catholic monks in the company of those pursuing the interests of the colportage, who are Protestants or have even seceded from the church.

One of them is the Benedictine Father Ansgar Poellmann in Beuron.

I had been facing a Benedictine Father in court once before. His name was Willibrord Bessler and called himself a professor. He had published a serious insult against me in the “Stern der Jugend” <Star of the Youth>. I found out that he had his domicile in the Benedictine abbey of Seckau in Styria; so, I travelled there and had him summoned to the district court of Leoben.

There, it turned out that he did have the right to bear the title of a professor at all. He gave me the following written apology: “Responding to a request to give a more detailed definition of the terms ‘professor’ and ‘author for the youth’, attributed to me in various writings, I hereby state that I am a teacher at the private secondary school of the abbey of Seckau and that I am a correspondent for the youth-magazine ‘Stern der Jugend’.

Furthermore, I truthfully declare that I regret the article contained in the above mentioned magazine (1903 No. 25) on the medical conditions of the author Karl May and that I formally take back those words he objected to in court.

“Seckau, October the 20th, 1904.

Father Willibrord Bessler O.S.B.” [a]

[a] OSB = Ordinis Sancti Benedicti (of the order of Saint Benedict). The original book incorrectly reads “O.S.P.”.

And now there was once again a Benedictine Father, I had to sue in court! The

name of the abbot seems to be Ildefons Schober in both cases. Might it be the same person? Not in Seckau and not in Beuron, but elsewhere, Benedictines have printed lots of illegal copies of my “traveller’s tales” without my knowledge, until I forbade them to do so. I do not know how it is possible for an religious order to print and distribute my works without any permission, and still to insult and persecute me in such a public manner, or rather to put me and these very same works under the ban! In vain, I am making every effort to find a logical connection between these two. After all, it goes entirely without saying that I could not possibly have allowed this printing to go on! By the way, this Father from Beuron is the very same who wants to “put a figurative noose around my neck, to whip me out of the temple of German art with it”. So, first they print copies of my books without asking me, and then they drive me out with their whips! This is how Father Poellmann characterises his own order, which has truly done more than enough for the benefit of our literature, so that it should not be given such a reputation by one of its members!

Father Poellmann has written a series of articles against me in the Catholic magazine “Ueber den Wassern” <Above the waters>, and I have answered them in the magazine “Freistatt” <asylum (literally: place of freedom)> from Vienna. This ought to have settled things between us, and it would have been up to the readers to decide, whether they would take his or my side. But, while I, quite naturally, was as factual and polite in my responses as possible, his articles consisted of almost nothing else but insults, so that he will have to be inconvenienced to appear in court. And furthermore, his personal relationship and the relationship of his writings to Mr. Lebius, the lawyer Gerlach, and the Muenchmeyers’ plan, to “destroy” me in the newspapers, has to be ascertained. He has denied to be in contact with Lebius, Gerlach, etc.; but these kinds of relationships of his are very easily proven. This point has to be clarified. For even he cannot deny that he had most forcefully taken part in “destroying” me. His articles in the “Wasser”-magazine are most eagerly used against me in both trials, the one against Lebius and the one against Pauline Muenchmeyer. He has even been named by Lebius as a witness or “expert” and will have to testify in Berlin in this capacity.

Concerning our trial for gross insult, Father Poellmann adheres to a tactic, which

I cannot approve of. I have to wonder, if it is part of this tactic of his to deceive the reading audience. At first, from time to time, certain articles were published in an ironic and patronising tone, making fun of the fact that I had not carried out my threat to sue him. And now, as he has to see that I did keep this promise, certain newspapers hostile to me keep on pretending that my complaints for gross insult had been dismissed by this or that court and that I would have to be liable for all expenses. This is not fair, perhaps even undignified. The question was only which court had the jurisdiction, nothing else.

When I filed the criminal charges against Father Poellmann, I was under the jurisdiction of the Inferior Court of Dresden. In the meantime, the Inferior Court of Koetzschenbroda had been founded, which is now in charge of my district. Therefore, the question was raised, whether the matter, as a consequence of this, had to be tried here or there or elsewhere. Until this has been decided, it has to be suspended. Whoever portrays it differently, can only be either ignorant or vicious. I know nothing about any expenses.

The situation concerning my complaint for gross insult against Father Expeditus Schmidt in Munich is quite similar. It has been filed in Dresden and the trial started in Koetzschenbroda. Here also, questions concerning the jurisdiction have been raised, but not by me. I have no reason at all to prefer the verdict to be pronounced in one place rather than another, for my cause is just.

I do not need to weigh with subtle reasoning, if I would win or lose my lawsuit in a certain place, with a certain court, and in a certain case. I must not cling to such extraneous things, but rather stick by the matter itself and the truth of it; the rest, I leave up to the judges.

These transfers were no obstruction, but an advantage, for me.

They have given me an opportunity to see the cards my opponents were holding. Most of all, it turned out that the two Fathers Schmidt and Poellmann are closely connected with the name and the cause of Muenchmeyer. Their lawyer is connected with the lawyer of Muenchmeyer and Lebius. I will prove this, and then the connection with the Muenchmeyers' plan to "to destroy me in the eyes of all of Germany in all the newspapers" will be perfectly self-evident. To enable

my readers to briefly review the current state of affairs, I am ending this chapter by quoting an article, which the “Wiener Montags-Journal” <Monday’s Journal of Vienna>

published this year on October the 17th. It reads: *\_KarlMayasnovelist.\_*

(A redress.) We are faced with an impressive series of volumes, the work of an immensely productive and successful author. But at the same time, it also constitutes his exoneration. This is because, until now, there have not been many cases where a person’s literary work has been the reason for such abysmally vicious and underhanded attacks, as those targeted against Karl May. Before we will turn to a detailed assessment, recognising the so very rich imagination of this German novelist, we want to give the defamed author the opportunity to defend himself, which is now, after the lawsuits against his spiteful and malicious opponents have been successful, also a redress. Mr. May has written to us: The entire so-called “KarlMay-persecution” has been constructed based on lies. The first one of these lies is, that I was an author for the youth and had written my traveller’s tales for immature, young people. Most of these tales have been published by the “Deutscher Hausschatz”, which as surely never been a magazine for boys. And every honest eye will instantly see, when glancing at the volumes which were published later, that they can only be understood by mentally grown-up persons. With this, all accusations of me allegedly “corrupting the youth” lose their basis. The fact that, nevertheless, young people are reading my books and even enjoy them very much, still would not prove that I had targeted them at them, but rather that a youthful soul is finding in them, what others are depriving it of.

A second lie is that I was fibbing in these traveller’s tales of mine. Whoever says so surely does not even suspect what a bad testimony he is giving to his own intelligence. After all, it only takes the analytic powers of an eighth-grader to realize that all of my narratives only have their roots in real life, but otherwise extend upwards into regions which are not so commonplace. Every reader who understands me knows that I describe countries and peoples which, up to this day, exist almost exclusively in fairy-tales, but have to move, by and by, into the realm of absolute reality for us. When I envision and describe as reality what is still a fairy-tale to others, only for ignorant or malicious people, this can be a reason to maintain that I was fibbing.



In the past, nobody would have thought of judging me in this insulting manner. Whoever had not understood me would not have said more than that I had a very extensive imagination. Only after the biggest of all lies which exist about me had been spread, this is the lie that I had written “abysmally indecent trashy novels”, they dared to talk to me in such a tone. This untrue statement has its source with a bookseller of colportage, who had an interest in spreading it around, in order to make as much money as possible by exploiting my name. In the person of Mr. Cardauns, who used to be the editor in chief of the newspaper called “Koelnische Volkszeitung” at that time, this lie found the man who, by means of his publications, did more than much to further its distribution and even took it on himself to produce “evidence” that the indecencies in question could be the product of nobody else’s but my pen. Quite naturally, the true, irrefutable proof would only have been possible by presenting the original manuscripts, I had written. All other evidence could only be based on intentional deception or self-delusion and finally had come out as a bombastic illusion.

What kind of evidence was it which Mr. Cardauns presented? He came forth with one unproven allegation after another. He listed quite a number of “inner reasons”, to conceal the lack of real reasons. He talked about proofs, evidence, indisputable official documents and such. The “Neuigkeits-Weltblatt” <Worldwide Paper of News> from Vienna even proves that he had stated that he would own the original document, undoubtedly proving May’s guilt.

Everyone had to presume based on this that he would have my original manuscripts in his possession, and therefore, he was believed, especially since those papers in which he had made his assertions persistently refused to print my responses. With his self-delusion he started a trend: others deluded themselves as well, until in due time they came to see the facts as they are by themselves. Today, only a few still believe in his elaborations.

Others accept them, because they benefit from them in a lawsuit or for similar reasons. Whether Father Expeditus Schmidt and Father Ansgar Poellmann, my two newest opponents, truly believe in their friend Cardauns, I do not know; I could only guess. What they assert is, from my point of view, far removed from any kind of a proof. But all they do against me, they base on the old foundation

laid out by Cardauns, and they really seem to be convinced that I will soon collapse under the accusations they and their allies make.

These allies are: The former colporteur Mrs. Pauline Muenchmeyer, publisher of the notorious "Temple of Venus", which had been confiscated by the police. Furthermore, there is the lawyer of that woman, Dr. Gerlach in Dresden, who, by now, has incessantly waged his war against me for entire nine years. And finally, there is this well-known Mr. Rudolf Lebius in Charlottenburg, the socialist, who has seceded from the Christian church, who had proposed that he would be willing to praise and laud me in his paper, if I only gave him between 3000 and 6000

marks, and in the end even 10.000 marks. I gave him nothing. In response, he changed over to the Muenchmeyers' side and was the most unrelenting one of my opponents ever since. I want to state explicitly that he also has the advocate Mr. Gerlach for a lawyer.

And when I am now adding that the Muenchmeyers' Mr. Gerlach is also the lawyer and advisor of Father Expeditus Schmidt and Father Ansgar Poellmann, this results in the following drastic picture of of the chase: I am completely surrounded. I am encircled by Mr.

Cardauns, the colporteur Mrs. Pauline Muenchmeyer, the advocate Mr. Gerlach, Father Schmidt, Mr. Lebius, and Father Poellmann.

Every one of them is ready to gun for me at any time. Though they deny being in contact with each other, they call upon one another as witnesses and experts in their lawsuits and assist each other in the collection of evidence against me and by producing petitions and legal statements for the courts. But the most prominent one of them all is this advocate of the Muenchmeyers', who directs everything and all of them, even the two Fathers. The most harmless and amusing one, on the other hand, is Mr. Cardauns, who, as far as I know, could never made to confess that he did not possess my original manuscripts, until recently in Bonn he had to admit in my presence, being interrogated by the judge in charge as a witness, that he had never even seen them.

The question, whether that Muenchmeyer lady will be able to bring me down with the assistance of her five secular and clerical comrades, has long since been decided. Nobody who knows how matters are would continue asking it. - -

Radebeul-Dresden, October 1910.

Karl May.

## IX. Conclusion

Just as my “traveller’s tales” are only sketches, this work before you is also just a sketch. It could not be anything else, because what I am telling you has not ended yet and because numerous lawsuits, which have been forced upon me, are taking aim at me like menacing revolvers. Furthermore, brutal physical pain prevents me from writing as I would like to. To receive, during a time of ten years, four times a day, entire stacks of letters and newspapers, overflowing with venom, mockery, and gloating, is more than any Samson or Hercules could endure. Mind and soul have remained strong. Not the slightest part of my inner self has changed. My confidence in God and my love for mankind have not been shaken. But in the end, it has still got the best of my body, which used to seem so indestructible in the past. It is on the verge of collapse. For one year, I lack natural sleep.

Whenever I want to rest for a few hours, I must resort to artificial means, to sleeping powders, which only numb the senses and are not harmless in their effect. I also cannot eat. Just a few bites a day, my poor, dear wife forces me to take. But instead, I am in pain, an incessant, terrible neuralgic pain, which forces me up from my bed at night and rips the pen out of my hand a hundred times during the day! I feel, as if I had to scream all of the time, to shout for help. I cannot lie down, cannot sit, cannot walk, and cannot stand up, and yet I have to do all of these things. Most of all, I would like to die, die, die, and yet I do not want to die and may not die, because my time is not up yet. I have to solve my task.

My task? Yes, my task! I have finally, finally realized what it is. It is just what I had thought, and yet so very, very different. I have already said: The KarlMay-problem is, like every other mortal's problem, an individual example of a problem which concerns all of mankind. But while most people are only called upon to represent to their small, immediate surroundings certain phases of the great problem, there are also others who have been given the hard task to serve as a representation of it, though also just on a small scale, but not just representing an individual detail, but rather the whole. The many represent parts of mankind, while the few represent images of mankind. The many can keep their narrow surroundings clean; people like this exist by the dozens; they can even appear as exemplary people. But the few are assigned the virtue and the sin, the purity and the filth of the entire mankind in a representative ratio; they can become famous generals or crude murderers, great diplomats or notorious swindlers, philanthropic financial geniuses or despicable pickpockets, but never exemplary people. They have not been granted the enjoyable fortune of unconscious mediocrity. If the forces around them are more powerful than they, they are torn between virtue and vice, between height and depth, between cheer and desperation, until they dissolve above the clouds or plunge into the abyss. If they are the stronger ones and if they are born into fortunate surroundings, they will proudly and calmly go on their shining course; but if they came into this world where baseness, poverty, and want rule, they will still reach their goal, because they have to, but the resistance they will have to overcome will be brutal and unrelenting, and, once they have ascended to this top, before they will be able to sound their cry of victory, they will collapse with exhaustion, to close their eyes to this word.

One would think that everyone knew which of these types of people he would belong to, or at least, everyone should feel obliged to think about this. I have done this and have arrived at the conclusion that I had no right to expect a simple, averagely happy life, but that I had to get acquainted with mankind's misery in its deepest depths, in order to work myself up from this misery just as persistently and just as exhaustingly as mankind requires floods of sweat and blood as well as millenia of time to rise from its. Likewise, I am convinced that I had been destined to meet with this unrelenting resistance, which opposes me up to this day, and that I have no right to complain about it, because I have brought

it upon myself just as all of mankind would progress faster, if they would finally stop blocking their own path with obstacles. It is plain to see that I do not accuse anybody but myself.

If I ever spoke too tough or harsh in this book, if I have been unfair or stubborn, then this has, by no means, been intentional or deliberate, but it has been the still not quite overcome anima, dictating this to me. As long as a person moves in the low realm, and this is what I had to do in this description of my life to a more than large extent, the low matters have some power over him, and I was not allowed to be untrue; I had to write as my social surroundings required. But now, that I am reaching the end and am starting to breathe a better, cleaner air, I am also cleaner and freer in what I am writing and am regaining the strength to overcome everything which seeks to embitter me.

And there has been more than enough reason for me to be embittered. In this, I am only talking about the last ten years and what has happened as a consequence of the lawsuit against the Muenchmeyers. This lawsuit has been conducted by my opponents, or rather by their lawyer Gerlach, in a manner which I had thought entirely impossible before. I had no idea to what an extent the law protects a lawyer in this respect. For the purpose of degrading the opposing party before the judge, he is at liberty to use means which nobody else is permitted to use. He is under the protection of article 193, because he is acting in his client's interests. I am going to list a selection of sample expressions, I had to put up with from the Muenchmeyers' advocate Dr. Gerlach, because he employed them in his capacity as a lawyer: He accused me of "imprudent extortions", "unjustified demands", numerous "audacities", and "mumbo jumbo". He called me "cunning", "fresh", "audacious", "slandering", "pathologically provoking untruthfulness", "liar", "lying May", "show-off", "Muenchhausen", "boaster", "fraud", "scoundrel", "swindler", "commonplace swindler", "burglar", "imposter", "convict", *etc. etc.* I am asking you: Are these kinds of offensive statements, even if there was some truth in them, permitted in everyday life? Would a truly well-educated man want to move in the same circles as someone who has made them? Well, in the circles of the court they are permitted, for I have sued this lawyer on account of them for gross insult and have been rejected. But there is even more: In response to this complaint of mine, he filed counter-

charges against me, and this was not rejected. The judge is perfectly innocent in this; he could not act any other way; the law proscribes it like this! One day, when the testimonies of the witnesses had turned out to be unfavourable for the Muenchmeyers'

party, this lawyer said to the judge: "But in any case, it is entirely impossible that a person with prior convictions, like May, could win this trial!" "You'll just have to wait and see,"

the judge answered to him. I was right there and had to put up with this insult, because the law allowed him to make it. For almost ten years, this has been going on like this and is still going on up to this day in the same tone and in the same manner.

A very high-ranking judge said, regarding this, to my lawyer: "Never in all of my long time on the bench, a case has touched me so deeply like the that of Karl May. How much must this poor, old man have suffered!" He might very well have added: "How much is he still suffering, and how much more will he suffer!" This judge knew my prison record very well; he had studied the files which existed on it. Nevertheless and in spite of the verbal abuse of my opponents, I won the trial and all appeals, surely an expressive proof that German judges are not influenced by invectives on the lawyers' part; but nevertheless, I had to listen to them without being able to speak up and I still have to do so up to this day. And they work their effect, though not on the verdict, but definitely into another direction. They introduce a cruel rudeness into the way the parties interact with each other and extent beyond the courtroom, out into the public and even into the private life. All those insulting expressions about me, which I have listed above, one would already have read in the newspapers and would likewise also have come across them in private conversations. This is the necessary consequence of those liberties which every malicious, unscrupulous lawyer is allowed to take, once he sees that crude rudeness will get him further than humaneness. He writes these rude statements into his legal documents, and from there, he arranges it for them to appear as official files proving his case in the newspapers. Or he might first sent them to the newspapers and then submit them in printed form to the court as evidence, without saying that they originally came from him. If such a lawyer has several like-minded, or by him persuaded, newspapers or small papers on his side, it is easy for him to shatter, or possibly even to destroy, within a short time, every existence, no matter how firm it might stand. "To destroy in the newspapers of

all of Germany”, this is called. And the law encourages this practice!

There is also another, most interesting example I care about, which, if anything, will sound less than favourable for me. But I am mentioning it nevertheless, because, intending to write for the benefit of the general public, I must not ask whether I might harm my own interests by this. My first wife had insulted the wife of an author from Dresden, who had been told by the Muenchmeyers that I had been previously convicted. He got even by informing against me with a German sovereign and told him that his relatives were reading my books and also visited me in person. The sovereign gave no reply. Then came a second letter with accusations, and now the sovereign was compelled to turn to Dresden, in order to find out what my prior convictions were all about. He received detailed information. An official was sent to Radebeul, to conduct on-the-spot investigations. He found out that my marriage had not been a happy one, which was the reason why I had not stayed at home in my free time, and that I had written in my books about countries where I had never been; everything I reported in them was not true. Therefore, the files of the police of Dresden record about me that I was leading an unsteady life and was an imposter by means of my literature. The sovereign was informed of this, and one of those relatives, he matter was concerned with, passed it on to me at the next opportunity in all the details. He knew very well how much there was to this matter, but asked me to be discrete, so that I had been compelled to keep silent about this. I also believed that I could keep silent, because I presumed that these kinds of police records were among the most secretive things in the administration. But now, they are being published by Lebius to my astonishment and are being exploited accordingly by my opponents. How does a former social democrat, who has seceded from the church, get hold of these secret records of the police of Dresden? The law permits it! Quite naturally, I now no longer feel obliged to be discrete and will insist that these records will be revised and corrected.

Another case brings me to Leipzig, where I, as I have reported on page 119 [a], have been apprehended forty-five years ago by unlawful means. This was such a long time ago that the court records about this have long since been destroyed, because humaneness demands that such traces shall only last for a very specific

time, and this time is up. Who has now considered the possibility that the police of Leipzig might also have made notes about this, which might still be in existence? Mr. Lebius has recently published them! How does a man like he now also get hold of the police records of Leipzig? The law permits it!

[a] Fifth chapter, second half of the 13th paragraph.

Likewise, has published the records of my divorce. These are most certainly of a nature which requires discretion and are none of his business at all. But the law permits him to do so!

He is informed about everything relating to my lawsuits. Who gives him that permission, and who makes it possible for him? The law and the Muenchmeyers' lawyer, who is his lawyer as well. Both are working hand in hand. At one time, Lebius even persuaded my ex-wife in Berlin to sign a blank power of attorney, but sent this to Dresden to the Muenchmeyers' lawyer, who then filled in the blanks as he saw fit for his particular purposes. These are only a few examples from my rich, personal experience with the fact that the law does not just permit, but even encourages, things which it ought to prohibit most strictly. Even the most judicious and humane judge is powerless against this, and this was what I was thinking of when I said before that I had finally, finally realised what my task was. About forty to fifty years ago, I have involuntarily descended to that place where the despised people dwell, for whom regaining the respect, which had been robbed from them, is made so very difficult. I have come to know them, and I know that they are worth no less than all those who only never fell because they either had never been on a high level or did not possess the necessary inner freedom to be able to fall. I want to descent back down to them, now being almost seventy years old, not being forced, but voluntarily, as my own decision. I want to tell them what nobody dared to tell them before, this is that nobody can help them, if they do not know how to help themselves; that they are doomed, unless they save themselves using their own power; by sticking most closely together among themselves. I want to present them with my example, my life and my efforts. I want to show them what will become of



all of their good intentions and all of their hard efforts, if others lack these good intentions. I want to show them that a single unfair lawyer or that single article 193 are enough to destroy even the most beautiful and best achievements of their strength of mind, of Christian love, and of humaneness in one blow. I want to tell them that it is a sin of mankind to conceal their share in the guilt of the guilty ones; but that it is also a mistake for the latter ones to keep their past guilt a secret. Our lives, my life, their lives shall be spread out openly before the eyes of God, but in particular also openly before our own eyes. Then, we will not bear a grudge, and then, we will not be resentful.

Because then, we will realise why it was possible for us to fall: We made ourselves fall. And once we realise this, we are able to forgive ourselves; and he who may forgive himself, will be forgiven. So, do away with the inappropriate feeling of being ashamed, and bring out openness! Only the secret we veil ourselves in gives that article and every unscrupulous person the power to think himself higher and better than us and still to be our - - - executioner!

I am only giving you an outline here. Like everything up to this point, this can also be nothing but a sketch for now. But I am feeling the need to transform the evil things which others have done to me into something good for my fellow human beings. I will enable those who had the same fate as I to draw those conclusions from my inhumane persecution which are beneficial to them. What good is all so-called “justice”, all so-called “clemency of the court”, all so-called “humane punishment”, all so-called “care for released prisoners”, if all it takes is one cunning lawyer or one questionable article to destroy all the good things which had come out of these efforts in a single moment? How can anybody expect a fallen man to get up again and to be a better person, as long as they fail to create better conditions as well in the surroundings he is put back into? Does it encourage him to know that, in spite of all efforts to become a better person, he must still continue to be, as long as he shall live, the ostracised one, the suppressed one, the one without rights, and will continue to be like this, because he is forced to remain silent, no matter what is happening to him, and to let them do everything to him?

Because if he does not do this, he is doomed. If he should go ahead and seek his rightful justice against those who insult, rob, and cheat him, his old files are dragged forward, and he is pilloried. Let me just remind you that a public

prosecutor from Dresden, even just for purely “scientific” reasons, had nailed me to the pillory, while I am still alive! He could not even wait for my death and maintained that an article of the law gave him the right to conduct this vivisection. In such a situation one cannot help but look into the faces of those who talk about humaneness, to see whether there might be a sardonic smile coming through, revealing how things really are. And one feels, together with the hundreds of thousands who are suffering from this, the burning urge to take all of these articles, because of which mankind’s good intentions fail, drag them to the light of day, and put them there where they must be, in order to be seen as what they really are, - - - into the public, before parliament!

Here lies the point where my task has to begin. There have already been several who have written down their experiences as “released prisoners”; but what could be gathered from these reports was so insignificant that it could not be of any benefit for the general public. Here, it is not enough to show the small lot of some people, but rather heavy, weighty fates of people, which are also real fates in the classical sense. *And my fate is*

*likethis.* I feel obliged, and it is my task, to put it into the service of humaneness. What I mean by this will, so I hope, be evident from my second volume.

It was a part of this task of mine, that the public did not only take an interest in Karl May the novelist, but also in the person May, and that everything which could be held against the latter had to be scooped up, down to the last drop. One thing was justified criticism; the other was the work of executioners, flayers, and knackers, I had to put up with without freeing myself from this agony and torture by paying the money they demanded from me. This was the spirits’ furnace of my fable, where they were bashing away at me, so that the sparks were spewing through every newspaper. They even still spew today. But soon, this will quiet down. The time of the hammer is over; only the file is still to come, and then, it will be done. It goes entirely without saying that all that pain, which came upon me, also had to influence my other task, my task as a novelist. There also was dross, and even more than enough. It also had to be removed.

Thus flew the soot, the filth, the dust, the hammer's blows. All of this is still lying all around me, but now, it will be cleared away, so that the clean, noble work shall begin.

It was quite generally a large, a hard, and a most painful process of clearing up and out; not just inside of me, but also externally, in my work, my profession, my house, my marriage.

Everything which had driven me to the furnace and the pain had to go. It was replaced with what was clean and honest and what was striving upwards with me, from Ardistan to Jinnistan, the land of the nobly spirited people. This resulted in a separation of good from evil, which could only be brought about by means of struggles and sacrifices. Now it has been completed. The storms have passed. Though there is still a few murky waters, murmuring here and there, some lawsuit for gross insult, a complaint with the public prosecutor's office, but this will also pass quickly, and then, there will be calm and peace around me, so that I will finally, finally obtain the time and space and state of mind, to approach my real, my only and last "work".

Looking back at the last ten years, I am full of gratitude for having survived them. There has never been a "persecution" like the one against me for as long as earth exists in the literature of any country, of any nation. There were tempests in the newspapers, tempests in the courtrooms, tempests in my own house, and tempests inside of me. Though my old, faithful, good friend, the body, maintains that he could no longer go along with me, I am still convinced that he will nevertheless be as willing and understanding again as he has always been. He had to endure what normally could not possibly have been endured. First, there were for entire six years the three instances of the first trial against the Muenchmeyers with all those upsetting and pathetic aspects connected with it. Then followed the twenty-two months of the investigation for perjury and incitement to perjury. This was because the Muenchmeyers' lawyer had filed a complaint for perjury with the public prosecutor's office against me and my witnesses, after he had lost the trial. The prosecutor had, according to his own statement, accepted the complaint to finally clear this matter up. This struggle, lasting for almost two years, quite naturally ended with the finding that no proof

of any punishable act committed by me or my witnesses could be established. But this was not the end of it yet, for other things came on top of this, which were almost even worse than everything which had happened before: the first assaults by Lebius; a double pneumonia, which kept me between life and death for several months; the accusations my ex-wife brought up against me, my present wife, and her mother, and by means of which she had sought to bring a severe punishment upon us; the complaints with the public prosecutor's office, which she had then filed by a friend against us on account of these accusations; the same complaints being repeated by Lebius in Berlin. Luckily, this ex-wife had voluntarily told and confessed everything which she then denied after the divorce, during the divorce proceedings in the presence of perfect strangers without any interference on my part, so that she could only have been lured into this later denial. The presentation of these pieces of evidence proved that all accusations against me were lies. Furthermore, there is the petition of Lebius with the public prosecutor's office to lock me up in a lunatic asylum; his petition to have me followed to America with a warrant for my arrest; the numerous articles against me in his paper "Der Bund"; his pamphlets with the most horrible lies, which were circulated in Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Italy, France, England, North and South America. In these, he even accused me of having strangled my father-in-law! [a] This goes on like this up until recent times. Finally, he informed against me for having made insulting statements about an investigating judge, and the very last thing was, about four weeks ago, a complaint with the public prosecutor against me for incest, the punishment for which is, as we all know, five years in prison. You see that the very most extreme means are being used to "destroy" me! To endure this, without losing the faith in God, the belief in the good of mankind, and all joy of life and strength to live, is an act I hardly think everybody would be capable of. I have endured it, without allowing myself to be tempted to take the law into my own hands, because I am incapable of doubting for a single moment in God and his love, and because, in all of these more than hard times, there had been a person by my side, whose brave, upward striving soul had lifted me up, like on the wings of angels, above all suffering, I was meant to be subjected to, this person is my present wife. If someone has had the right to write books on the topic of "The Savage Beast in a Woman" [b], I might just as well feel obliged to publish, as a contrast to this, a book bearing the title "Heaven in a Woman".

[a] This should probably read "grandfather-in-law", referring to C.G. Pollmer,

the grandfather of Karl May's first wife. At any rate, Lebius's accusation is bogus.

[b] "Die Bestie im Weibe" by Carl Felix von Schlichtegroll (1862-1946).

With such a woman by my side, who is a source everything which is clean, noble, and eternal in a human being, everything can be achieved in respect to the pains of life on earth, and everything can be performed in respect to the work which is still ahead for me, as far as it is humanly possible. I am no longer so terribly alone. No longer, I have to tap into nothing but my own inner self, but rather I have been joined by a delightfully plentiful living soul, by whose influence everything inside of me which is leading me towards the good goal is being doubled. Severely ailing physically, I am of a fresh mind and in my soul at least just as much full of confidence as in my youth. I am not foolish enough to deny to myself that I am regarded as an outcast, cast out from the church, society, and literature. One person will start bashing at me, because he regards me as a Catholic or even Jesuit in disguise; another one will reach for the cudgel, because he thinks that I was still secretly a Protestant. Do you think that those two would manage to pledge their allegiance exclusively to whomever they happen to get the most thorough thrashing from at any given time? That I am regarded as socially dead, I do not care about. I do not have the slightest reason to be eager to be a part of that society the acquaintance of which I had been forced to make in my times of suffering. By the way, we two old folks, my dear wife and I, are thus perfectly sufficient to one another in respect to world within ourselves, that we would not even be capable to yearn for the "society" of others. And concerning me being cast out from literature, I can also live with that. The path I am on has been taken by no one else before me; I would therefore, even without the hatred directed against me, be forced to be a lonely man. I am furthermore convinced that later, once they will be properly acquainted with me and what I want, a sizable number, perhaps even many, will leave the large crowd, in order to join me. Old paths can lead to nothing more than old, dead treasures. But whoever is searching for new, living treasures, shall also take new, not old, paths. And my path is a new one! The fate of my previous work will only be determined by their worth or worthlessness, by nothing else. If they are any good, they will stay, no matter whether they are presently being praised or condemned. If they are no good, they will disappear, no matter whether they are now rejected or not. And the most important thing is, the person who has their

worth or worthlessness under his control is just me alone. No one of my opponents, no matter how powerful and influential he may be in literature, can influence this in even the slightest degree. This sounds proud and boastful, but it is true. These works are collections of sketches, are preliminary exercises, are preparations for what is to come later. If those later things will turn out well, everything by means of which I prepared myself for it will be justified, no matter how or what is being thought and written about it now.

Now, there is only one final remark in respect to the Muenchmeyer novels left for me to make. One of my most unrelenting opponents wrote I should by no means fool anybody into believing that a trashy publisher could transform decent novels into indecent ones; this would be a huge job, which nobody would be able to cope with.

This gentleman seems to be in the fortunate position to be infinitely far removed from the live and activities of a trashy publisher. First of all, if someone is able to spend the time and effort to write a novel, then someone ought to be much more able to spend the shorter time and lesser effort to change this novel!

Secondly, such a change requires by no means as much time and work as my opponent seems to assume. The insertion of a few words is perfectly sufficient to transform a "moral" sheet of printed paper into an "immoral" one. Thirdly, there is more than enough manpower for such changes available, and they have such an astonishing routine in it that even an insider is amazed by the the amount they can cope with. I have supplied evidence to this and will supply even more.

Walther, the frequently mentioned factotum, sat at Muenchmeyers' every day, from early in the morning until in the evening, only doing these kinds of work, and then reading the proofs, which the author never got to see. The evidence given first by Fischer, who had bought the Muenchmeyers'

business, and a few years later by his heirs, in a material manner and in court, on these adaptations of my novels, is well known.

Concerning this, Muenchmeyer's nephew, who had been the head pressman, had confirmed as a witness in the trial that Muenchmeyer had personally altered entire chapters. Another witness had testified under oath that Muenchmeyer had confessed to him that he was making large, extensive changes to my novels, he

would better not tell me anything about. I suppose, I do not need to list here even more examples, which are available to me, to make you comprehend why I am absolutely demanding to be presented with my original manuscripts, which surely would carry a so very different weight as evidence than the fading memory of an old typesetter, who, after thirty years, is expected to find his way around through the mess of Muenchmeyer's letter-cases of that time.

Furthermore, these changes often stand out thus sharply from my original text, that very numerous readers are assuring me that they could say very precisely where the forgery begins and where it ends.

Finally, I cannot neglect drawing your attention to a trick of my opponents, and of Mr. Lebius in particular, which is being employed to cause those of my readers who belong to the higher classes to be outraged against me. They would write, for instance, in an eye-catching place, that I was socialising with the high society of Dresden and that I would quite generally make the greatest effort to obtain the acquaintance of high-ranking people. Not a single word, not a single letter of this is true.

When I am by myself, I feel most comfortable, and I also wish, in this respect, for nothing else than to remain by myself. I would like to see that person who would want to prove to me that I had forced my company on him! In other places, it has been stated emphatically, that I was a regular guest at "courts". This is even more decisively untrue. If some aristocrat, who might belong to some "court", would read my books and occasionally exchange a few words with me, I would be the very last person to interpret this as me being a "regular at court". Behind these statements, which are pure fiction, there can only be the intention, to give me, in those circles, the reputation of a indiscrete person or even a liar, and to harm me even there, where I am absolutely not to be found. - -

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In the end of this volume, I am returning to the beginning, to my old, dear fable of "Sitara", I had started with. Not much time will pass, before this fable will be known as the truth, and even as the most tangible there is. It is the task of the present century, which has just started, to enable our untrained eyes to see the

great, exalted symbolism of daily life and to bring us to the bliss giving and uplifting realisation that there are higher and more undeniable realities than those with which the workdays and weekdays keep us busy. The sketches I drew and published shall serve to prepare for this realisation. Therefore, they are written in a symbolic manner and only have to be interpreted allegorically, if they are to be understood. One would think that it is quite amazing that this seems to be so hard for the common reader. It should not be too much of a hard nut to crack, to figure out something when reading a parable. When I refer to Ardistan as the land of the ethically low and Jinnistan as the land of the high, nobly thinking people, it could not require an almost academic education to see what I mean when I describe a journey from Ardistan to Jinnistan. The reader simply has to transport himself in his imagination from his world of weekdays into my world of Sundays, and this, I would think, is surely not harder for him than to leave his workshop every Sunday, in order to go to church at the sound of the bells.

Just as going to church this way frees a person from earthly pressures, I want to free the inner part of my readers from the external pressure by means of my tales. They shall hear bells ringing. They shall sense and experience how a prisoner feels who hears the locks clanging, because the day has come when he is being released. It is just as easy to understand my books and to comprehend their contents, as it is easy to interpret this imprisonment allegorically. I want my readers to stop regarding life as a merely material existence. This view is a prison for them, beyond the walls of which they are unable to see, to behold the sunny, free, wide land. They are prisoners, but I want to free them. And in seeking to free them, I am freeing myself, because I am also not free, but rather imprisoned since a long, long time ago. At that time, when I was living in prison, I was free. There, I lived protected by the walls. There, everyone stepping into my cell came with good and honest intentions.

There, nobody was allowed to touch me. There, nobody was allowed to disturb the development of my inner self. No villain had me in his power. Whatever I possessed and whatever I obtained was my sure and inalienable property, until I - was released, not for a moment longer! For when I was released, I lost my freedom and my human rights. What others who only know how to talk in materialistic terms refer to as freedom has been a prison to me, a labour camp, a penitentiary, in which I have been languishing by now for thirty-six years,



without finding a single person, aside from my present wife, I would have been able to talk to, as I used to talk to that unforgettable Catholic Bible teacher. I have not lived and worked for myself, but only for others. Whatever I obtained, I have been defrauded out of. Whatever savings I made, have been stolen from me. Any given person was allowed to do with me whatever he pleased, for everywhere he found a lawyer taking his case. Any given person was allowed to suspect me, insult me, bash away at me, for everywhere there was an article of law protecting him. I had to conduct lawsuits for six years for the sake of my property, and when I had won the trial, this did not mean by a long shot that I would have received anything, and I was put under preliminary investigation for perjury for twenty-two months. By now, I am already conducting lawsuits for almost ten years, and still, I have no result. The law does not want to have it any other way. But in the meantime, I have been like a prison inmate, who may be flogged, hurt, and tortured by everybody however he may please, if he only succeeds in arming himself with one of those articles of law, which are the ideals of all “resolute” lawyers. Yes indeed, I am a captive, a prison inmate, even now! A dozen lawsuits have detained me, so that by no means I would be able to escape, and everybody who wanted money from me, but did not get any, has behaved like a disciplinarian and has been bashing away at me. I have wanted the best for all of those I write for, their internal and external wellbeing, their present and their future happiness. What have I been given for this good intentions of mine? Scorn, mockery, and sarcasm! When I was a prison inmate, I was no prisoner. And now that I am it no more, I am it still. Why?

And you are laughing about me writing allegorically? Are not even hell and purgatory allegories to us, who are the poorest of them all? Where is a hell, if not in yourselves? And where is purgatory, if not in ourselves? I am talking about this purgatory when I am symbolically telling the story of my “spirits’ furnace”, the terrible time of which I will have overcome today or tomorrow.

I hold no grudge against you, for I know it had to be this way.

It had been my task to bear every heavy load and to taste every bitterness, which was to be borne and tasted here; I have to use this in my work now. I am not embittered, because I know my guilt. And what others had been forced to do to me, I do not hold against them. I am just asking for that one thing: Finally, finally, let me have the time to start this work!

Now that my life's hard work is all quite done, Just leisure is what old age shall be bringing.

And what perhaps I will still look upon With harp and psaltry I will still be singing.

I gave you all I got from God above, Not for myself, among you I've been living.

And when you're giving hatred for my love, I'll be content with these thanks you are giving.

Now that my life's hard pains are all quiet done, To soothe my grief on God I am depending.

And what might still on me will come upon He shall, in me, lead to a joyous ending.

The guilt you burdened me with heavily, Was partially not my own, I must be saying.

The worldly thoughts on this which stir in me, I'll gladly hide, except when I am praying.

Now that my life's hard test is all quiet done, The Lord's own verdict I might soon be hearing, Which way on me He might decide upon It's my salvation, nothing I'd be fearing.

I cheer. From dungeons I will be set free; At last, this prison's ties He'll sever.

Farewell! And he who still will misjudge me Might just as well go on, hate me for ever!

The End.

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