Heinrich Mann

The Patrioteer

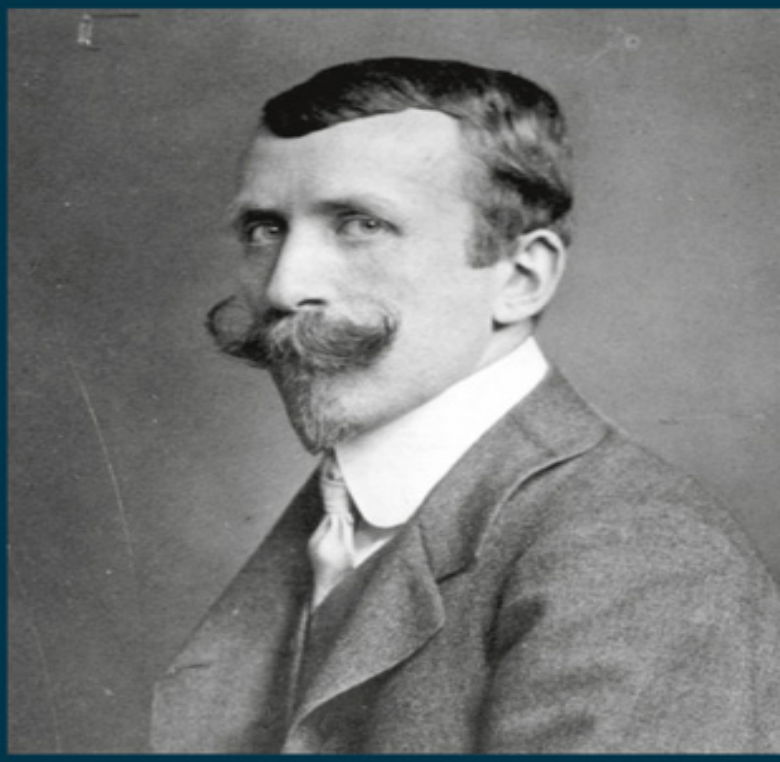

Table of Contents

I

II

III

IV

V

VI

I

Diederich Hessling was a dreamy, delicate child, frightened of everything, and troubled with constant earache. In winter he hated to leave the warm room, and in summer the narrow garden, which smelt of rags from the paper factory, and whose laburnum and elder-trees were overshadowed by the wooden roofs of the old houses. Diederich was often terribly afraid when he raised his eyes from his story book, his beloved fairy tales. A toad half as big as himself had been plainly sitting on the seat beside him! Or over there against the wall a gnome, sunk to his waist in the ground, was staring at him! His father was even more terrible than the gnome and the toad, and moreover he was compelled to love him. Diederich did love him. Whenever he had pilfered, or told a lie, he would come cringing shyly like a dog to his father's desk, until Herr Hessling noticed that something was wrong and took his stick from the wall. Diederich's submissiveness and confidence were shaken by doubts so long as any misdeed remained undiscovered. Once when his father, who had a stiff leg, fell downstairs the boy clapped his hands madly—and then ran away at full speed.

The workmen used to laugh when he passed the workshops after having been punished, crying loudly, his face swollen with tears. Then Diederich would stamp his feet and put out his tongue at them. He would say to himself: "I have got a beating, but from my papa. You would be glad to be beaten by him, but you are not good enough for that."

He moved amongst the men like a capricious potentate. Sometimes he would threaten to tell his father that they were bringing in beer, and at others he would coquettishly allow them to wheedle out of him the hour when Herr

Hessling was expected to return. They were on their guard against the boss; he knew them, for he had been a workman himself. He had been a vat-man in the old mills where every sheet of paper was made by hand. During that time he had served in all the wars, and after the last one, when everybody made money, he was able to buy a paper machine. His plant consisted of one cylinder machine and one cutter. He himself counted the sheets. He kept his eye on the buttons which were taken from the rags. His little son often used to accept a few from the women, on condition that he did not tell on those who took some away with them. One day he had collected so many that he got the idea of exchanging them with the grocer for sweets. He succeeded —but in the evening Diederich knelt in his bed and, as he swallowed the last piece of barley sugar, he prayed to Almighty God to leave the crime undetected. He nevertheless allowed it to leak out. His father had always used the stick methodically, his weather-beaten face reflecting an old soldier's sense of honour and duty. This time his hand trembled and a tear rolled down, trickling over the wrinkles, onto one side of his grey upturned moustache. "My son is a thief," he said breathlessly, in a hushed voice, and he stared at the child as if he were a suspicious intruder. "You lie and you steal. All you have to do now is to commit a murder."

Frau Hessling tried to compel Diederich to fall on his knees before his father and beg his pardon, because his father had wept on his account. Diederich's instinct, however, warned him that this would only have made his father more angry. Hessling had no sympathy whatever with his wife's sentimental manner. She was spoiling the child for life. Besides he had caught her lying just like little Diederich. No wonder, for she read novels! By Saturday night her week's work was often not completed. She gossiped with the servant instead of exerting herself. … And even then Hessling did not know that his wife also pilfered, just like the

child. At table she did not dare to eat enough and she crept surreptitiously to the cupboard. Had she dared to go into the workshop she would also have stolen buttons.

She prayed with the child “from the heart,” and not according to the prescribed forms, and that always brought a flush to her face. She used to beat him also and gave him thorough thrashings, consumed with a desire for revenge. On such occasions she was frequently in the wrong, and then Diederich threatened to complain to his father. He would pretend to go into the office and, hiding somewhere behind a wall, would rejoice at her terror. He exploited his mother’s tender moods, but felt no respect for her. Her resemblance to himself made that impossible, for he had no self-respect. The consequence was that he went through life with a conscience too uneasy to withstand the scrutiny of God.

Nevertheless mother and son spent twilight hours over flowing with sentiment. From festive occasions they jointly extracted the last drop of emotion by means of singing, piano-playing and story-telling. When Diederich began to have doubts about the Christ Child he let his mother persuade him to go on believing a little while longer, and thereby he felt relieved, faithful and good. He also believed obstinately in a ghost up in the Castle, and his father, who would not hear of such a thing, seemed too proud, and almost deserving of punishment. His mother nourished him with fairy tales. She shared with him her fear of the new, animated streets, and of the tramway which crossed them and took him past the city wall towards the Castle, where they enjoyed delightful thrills. At the corner of Meisestrasse you had to pass a policeman, who could take you off to prison if he liked. Diederich’s heart beat nervously. How gladly he would have made a détour! But then the policeman would have noticed his uneasy conscience and have seized him. It was much better to prove that one felt

pure and innocent—so with trembling voice Diederich asked the policeman the time.

After so many fearful powers, to which he was subjected; his father, God, the ghost of the Castle and the police; after the chimney-sweep, who could slip him right up through the flue until he, too, was quite black, and the doctor, who could paint his throat and shake him when he cried—after all these powers, Diederich now fell under the sway of one even more terrible, which swallowed you up completely—the school. Diederich went there howling, and because he wanted to howl he could not give even the answers which he knew. Gradually he learnt how to exploit this tendency to cry whenever he had not learnt his lessons, for all his fears did not make him more industrious or less dreamy. And thus, until the teachers saw through the trick, he was able to avoid many of the evil consequences of his idleness. The first teacher who saw through it, at once earned his wholehearted respect. He suddenly stopped crying and gazed at him over the arm which he was holding bent in front of his face, full of timid devotion. He was always obedient and docile with the strict teachers. On the good-natured ones he played little tricks, which could with difficulty be proved against him and about which he did not boast. With much greater satisfaction he bragged of getting bad marks and great punishments. At table he would say: “To-day Herr Behnke flogged three of us again.” And to the question: Whom? “I was one of them.”

Diederich was so constituted that he was delighted to be long to an impersonal entity, to this immovable, inhumanly indifferent, mechanical organisation which was the college. He was proud of this power, this grim power, which he felt, is only through suffering. On the headmaster’s birthday flowers were placed on the desk and the blackboard. Diederich actually decorated the cane.

In the course of the years two catastrophes, which befell the all-powerful, filled him with a holy and wonderful horror.

An assistant master was called down in front of the class by the principal and dismissed. A senior master became insane. On these occasions still higher powers, the principal and the lunatic asylum, made fearful havoc of those who had hitherto wielded so much power. From beneath, insignificant but unharmed, one could raise one's eyes to these victims, and draw from their fate a lesson which rendered one's own lot more easy. In relation to his younger sisters Diederich replaced the power which held him in its mechanism. He made them take dictation, and deliberately make more mistakes than they naturally would, so that he could make furious corrections with red ink, and administer punishment. His punishments were cruel. The little ones cried—and then Diederich had to humble himself in order that they should not betray him.

He had no need of human beings in order to imitate the powers that be. Animals, and even inanimate objects, were sufficient. He would stand at the rail of the paper-making machine and watch the cylinder sorting out the rags. "So that one is gone! Look out, now, you blackguards!" Diederich would mutter, and his pale eyes glared. Suddenly he stepped back, almost falling into the tub of chlorine. A workman's footsteps had interrupted his vicious enjoyment.

Only when he himself received the punishment did he feel really big and sure of his position. He hardly ever resisted evil. At most he would beg a comrade: "Don't hit me on the back, that's dangerous." It was not that he was lacking in any sense of his rights and any love of his own advantage. But Diederich held that the blows which he received brought no practical profit to the striker and no real loss to himself. These purely ideal values seemed to him far less serious than the cream puff which the head waiter at the Netziger Hof had long since promised him, but had never produced. Many times Diederich wended his way, with earnest gait, up Meisestrasse to the market place, and called upon his swallow-tailed friend to deliver the goods. One day,

however, when the waiter denied all knowledge of his promise, Diederich declared, as he stamped his foot in genuine indignation: “This is really too much of a good thing. If you don’t give me it immediately, I’ll report you to the boss!” Thereupon George laughed and brought him the cream puff.

That was a tangible success. Unfortunately Diederich could enjoy it only in haste and fear, for he was afraid that Wolfgang Buck, who was waiting outside, would come in on him and demand the share which had been promised to him. Meanwhile he found time to wipe his mouth clean, and at the door he broke out into violent abuse of George, whom he called a swindler who had no cream puffs at all. Diederich’s sense of justice, which had just manifested itself so effectively to his own advantage, did not respond to the claims of his friend, who could not, at the same time, be altogether ignored. Wolfgang’s father was much too important a personage for that. Old Herr Buck did not wear a stiff collar, but a white silk neckcloth, on which his great curly white beard rested. How slowly and majestically he tapped the pavement with his goldtopped walking-stick! He wore a silk hat, too, and the tails of his dress coat often peeped out under his overcoat, even in the middle of the day! For he went to public meetings, and looked after the affairs of the whole city. Looking at the bathing establishment, the prison and all the public institutions, Diederich used to think: “That belongs to Herr Buck.” He must be tremendously wealthy and powerful. All the men, including Herr Hessling, took off their hats most respectfully to him. To deprive his son of something by force was a deed whose dangerous consequences could not be foretold. In order not to be utterly crushed by the mighty powers, whom he so profoundly respected, Diederich had to go quietly and craftily to work.

Only once did it happen, when he was in the Lower Third form, that Diederich forgot all prudence, acted blindly and

be came himself an oppressor, drunk with victory. As was the usual and approved custom, he had bullied the only Jew in his class, but then he proceeded to an unfamiliar manifestation. Out of the blocks which were used for drawing he built a cross on the desk and forced the Jew onto his knees before it. He held him tight, in spite of his resistance; he was strong! What made Diederich strong was the applause of the by-standers, the crowd whose arms helped him, the overwhelming majority within the building and in the world outside. He was acting on behalf of the whole Christian community of Netzig. How splendid it was to share responsibility, and to feel the sensation of collective consciousness.

When the first flush of intoxication had waned, it is true, a certain fear took its places but all his courage returned to Diederich when he saw the face of the first master he met. It was so full of embarrassed good will. Others openly showed their approval. Diederich smiled up at them with an air of shy understanding. Things were easier for him after that. The class could not refuse to honour one who enjoyed the favour of the headmaster. Under him Diederich rose to the head of the class and secretly acted as monitor. At least, he laid claim, later on, to the latter of these honours also. He was a good friend to all, laughed when they planned their escapades, an unreserved and hearty laugh, as befitted an earnest youth who could yet understand frivolity —and then, during the lunch hour, when he brought his notebook to the professor, he reported everything. He also reported the nicknames of the teachers and the rebellious speeches which had been made against them. In repeating these things his voice trembled with something of the voluptuous terror which he had experienced as he listened to them with half-closed eyes. Whenever there was any disparaging comment on the ruling powers he had a guilty feeling of relief, as if something deep down in himself, like a kind of hatred, had hastily and furtively satisfied its hunger.

By sneaking on his comrades he atoned for his own guilty impulses.

For the most part he had no personal feeling against the pupils whose advancement was checked by his activities. He acted as the conscientious instrument of dire necessity. Afterwards he could go to the culprit and quite honestly sympathise with him. Once he was instrumental in catching some one who had been suspected of copying. With the knowledge of the teacher, Diederich gave him a mathematical problem, the working out of which was deliberately wrong, while the final result was correct. That evening, after the cheater had been exposed, some of the students were sitting in the garden of a restaurant outside the gate singing, as they were allowed to do after gymnasium. Diederich had taken a seat beside his victim. Once, when they had emptied their glasses he slipped his right hand into that of his companion, gazed trustfully into his eyes, and began all alone to sing in a bass voice that quivered with emotion:

"Ich hatt' einen Kameraden,
Einen bessern findst du nit…."

For the rest, with increasing school experience he could make a good show in most subjects, without going beyond what was required of him in any one, or learning anything in the world which was not prescribed in the programme. German composition was his most difficult subject, and any one who excelled at it inspired him with an inexplicable mistrust.

Since he had been promoted to the highest class his matriculation was certain, and his father and teachers felt that he ought to continue his studies. Old Hessling, having marched through the Brandenburger Tor in 1866 and 1871, decided to send Diederich to Berlin.

As he did not care to venture far from the neighbourhood of Friederichstrasse he rented a room up in Tieckstrasse, so that he had only to walk straight down and could not miss

the University. As he had nothing else to do, he went there twice a day, and in the intervals he often wept from homesickness. He wrote a letter to his father and mother thanking them for his happy childhood. He seldom went out unless he had to. He scarcely dared to eat; he was afraid to spend his money before the end of the month, and he would constantly feel his pocket to see if it was still there.

Lonely as he felt, he still did not go to Blücherstrasse with his father's letter to Herr Göppel, the cellulose manufacturer, who came from Netzig and also did business with Hessling. He overcame his shyness on the fourth Sunday, and hardly had the stout red-faced man, whom he had so often seen in his father's office, waddled up to meet him than Diederich wondered why he had not come sooner. Herr Göppel immediately asked after everybody in Netzig, but especially old Buck. Although his beard was now grey he still respected old Buck as he had done when he was a boy like Diederich, only it was for different reasons. He took off his hat to such a man, one of those whom the German people should esteem more highly than certain persons whose favourite remedy was blood and iron, for which the nation had to pay so dearly. Old Buck was a Forty. Eighter, and had actually been condemned to death. "It is to such people as old Buck," said Herr Göppel, "that we owe the privilege of sitting here as free men." And, as he opened another bottle of beer: "nowadays we are expected to let ourselves be trampled on with jackboots…."

Herr Göppel confessed himself a liberal opponent of Bismarck's. Diederich agreed with everything that Göppel said: he had no opinion to offer about the Chancellor, the young Emperor and freedom. Then he became uncomfortable, for a young girl had come into the room, and at the first glance her elegance and beauty frightened him.

"My daughter Agnes," said Herr Göppel.

A lanky youth, in his flowing frock-coat, Diederich stood there, blushing furiously. The girl gave him her hand. No

doubt she wanted to be polite, but what could one say to her? Diederich said yes, when she asked him if he liked Berlin; and when she asked if he had been to the theatre yet, he said no. He was perspiring with nervousness, and was firmly convinced that his departure was the only thing which would really interest the young lady. But how could he get out of the place. Fortunately a third party stepped into the breach, a burly creature named Mahlmann, who spoke with a loud Mecklenburg accent, seemed to be a student of engineering and to be a lodged at Göppel's. He reminded Fräulein Agnes of a walk they had arranged to take. Diederich was invited to accompany then. In dismay he pleaded the excuse of an acquaintance who was waiting for him outside and went off at once. "Thank God," he thought, "she has some one," but the thought hurt him.

Herr Göppel opened the door for him in the dark hall and asked if his friend was also new to Berlin. Diederich lied, saying his friend was from Berlin. "For if neither of you know the city you will take the wrong bus. No doubt you have often lost yourself already in Berlin." When Diederich admitted it, Herr Göppel seemed satisfied. "Here it is not like in Netzig; you can walk about for half a day. Just fancy when you come from Tieckstrasse here to the Halle Gate you have walked as far as three times through the whole of Netzig. ... Well now, next Sunday you must come to lunch."

Diederich promised to go. When the time came he would have preferred not to, he went only out of fear of his father. This time he had to undergo a tête-à-tête with the young lady. Diederich behaved as if absorbed in his own affairs and under no obligation to entertain her. She began again to speak about the theatre, but he interrupted her gruffly, saying he had no time for such things. Oh yes, her father had told her that Herr Hessling was studying chemistry.

"Yes. As a matter of fact that is the only science which can justify its existence," Diederich asserted, without exactly knowing what put that idea into his head.

Fräulein Göppel let her bag fall, but he stooped so reluctantly that she had picked it up before he could get to it. In spite of that, she thanked him softly and almost shyly. Diederich was annoyed. “These coquettish women are horrible,” he reflected. She was looking for something in her bag.

“Now I have lost it—I mean my sticking-plaster. It is bleeding again.”

She unwound her handkerchief from her finger. It looked so much like snow that Diederich thought that the blood on it would sink in.

“I have some plaster,” he said with a bow.

He seized her finger, and before she could wipe off the blood, he licked it.

“What on earth are you doing?”

He himself was startled, and wrinkling his brow solemnly he said: “Oh, as a chemist I have to do worse things than that.”

She smiled. “Oh yes, of course, you are a sort of doctor. … How well you do it,” she remarked as she watched him sticking on the plaster.

“There,” he said, pushing her hand away and moving back. The air seemed to have become close and he thought: “If it were only possible to avoid touching her skin. It is so disgustingly soft.” Agnes stared over his head. After a time she tried again: “Haven’t we got common relations in Netzig?” She compelled him to go over a few families with her and they discovered a cousin.

“Your mother is still living, isn’t she? You should be glad of that. Mine is long since dead. I don’t suppose I shall live long either. One has premonitions”—and she smiled sadly and apologetically.

Silently Diederich resolved that this sentimentality was ridiculous. Another long interval, and as they both hastened to speak, the gentleman from Mecklenburg arrived. He squeezed Diederich’s hand so hard that the latter winced,

and at the same time he looked into his face with a smile of triumph. He drew a chair unconcernedly close to Agnes's knee, and with an air of proprietorship began talking animatedly about all sorts of things which concerned only the two of them. Diederich was left to himself and he discovered that Agnes was not so terrible, when he could contemplate her undisturbed. She wasn't really pretty; her aquiline nose was too small, and freckles were plainly visible on its narrow bridge. Her light brown eyes were too close together, and they blinked when she looked at any one. Her lips were too thin, as indeed her whole face was. "If she had not that mass of reddish brown hair over her forehead and that white complexion. ..." He noted, too, with satisfaction that the nail of the finger which he had licked was not quite clean.

Herr Göppel came in with his three sisters, one of whom was accompanied by her husband and children. Her father and her aunts threw their arms round Agnes and kissed her fervently, but with solemn composure. The girl was taller and slimmer than any of them, and as they hung about her narrow shoulders she looked down on them with an air of distraction. The only kiss which she returned, slowly and seriously, was her father's. As Diederich watched this he could see in the bright sunlight the pale blue veins in her temples overshadowed by auburn hair.

It fell to him to take one of the aunts into the dining-room. The man from Mecklenburg had taken Agnes's arm. The silk Sunday dresses rustled round the family table, while the gentlemen took precautions not to crush the tails of their frock-coats. While the gentlemen rubbed their hands in anticipation and cleared their throats, the soup was brought in.

Diederich sat at some distance from Agnes, and he could not see her unless he bent forward—which he carefully refrained from doing. As his neighbour left him in peace, he ate vast quantities of roast veal and cauliflower. The food

was the subject of detailed conversation and he was called upon to testify to its excellence. Agnes was warned not to eat the salad, she was advised to take a little red wine, and she was requested to state whether she had worn her goloshes that morning. Turning to Diederich Herr Göppel related how he and his sisters somehow or other had got separated in Friederichstrasse, and had not found one another until they were in the bus. “That’s the sort of thing that would never happen in Netzig,” he cried triumphantly to the whole table. Mahlmann and Agnes spoke of a concert to which they said they must go, and they were sure papa would let them. Herr Göppel mildly objected and the aunts supported him in chorus. Agnes should go to bed early and soon go for a change of air; she had overexerted herself in the winter. She denied it. “You never let me go outside the door. You are terrible.”

Diederich secretly took her part. He was swept by a wave of chivalry: He would have liked to make it possible for her to do everything she wished, to be happy and to owe her happiness to him. … Then Herr Göppel asked him if he would like to go to the concert. “I don’t know,” he said indifferently, looking at Agnes who leaned forward. “What sort of a concert is it? I go only to concerts where I can get beer.”

“Quite right,” said Herr Göppel’s brother-in-law.

Agnes had shrunk back, and Diederich regretted his statement.

They were all looking forward to the custard but it did not come. Herr Göppel advised his daughter just to have a look. Before she could push away her plate Diederich had jumped up, hurling his chair against the wall, and rushed to the door. “Mary! the custard!” he bawled. Blushing, and without daring to look any one in the face, he returned to his seat, but he saw only too clearly how they smiled at one another. Mahlmann actually snorted contemptuously. With forced heartiness the brother-in-law said: “Always polite; as a

gentleman should be.” Herr Göppel smiled affectionately at Agnes, who did not raise her eyes from her plate. Diederich pressed his knees against the leaf of the table until it shook. He thought: “My God, my God, if only I hadn’t done that!”

When they wished each other “*gesegnete Mahlzeit*” he shook hands with everybody except Agnes, to whom he bowed awkwardly. In the drawing-room at coffee he carefully chose a seat where he was screened by Mahlmann’s broad back. One of the aunts tried to take possession of him.

“What are you studying, may I ask, young man?” she said.

“Chemistry.”

“Oh, I see, physics?”

“No, chemistry.”

“Oh, I see.”

Auspiciously as she had begun, she could not get any further. To himself Diederich described her as a silly goose. The whole company was impossible. In moody hostility he looked on until the last relative had departed. Agnes and her father had seen them out, and Herr Göppel returned to the room and found the young man, to his astonishment, still sitting there alone. He maintained a puzzled silence and once dived his hand into his pocket. When Diederich said goodbye of his own accord, without trying to borrow money, Göppel displayed the utmost amiability. “I’ll say good-bye to my daughter for you,” said he, and when they got to the door he added, after a certain hesitation: “Come again next Sunday, won’t you?”

Diederich absolutely determined never to put his foot in the house again. Nevertheless, he neglected everything for days afterwards to search the town for a place where he could buy Agnes a ticket for the concert. He had to find out beforehand from the posters the name of the virtuoso whom Agnes had mentioned. Was that he? hadn’t the name sounded something like that? Diederich decided, but he opened his eyes in horror when he discovered that it cost

four marks fifty. All that good money to hear a man make music! Once he had paid and got out into the street, he became indignant at the swindle. Then he recollected that it was all for Agnes and his indignation subsided. He went on his way through the crowd feeling more and more mellow and happy. It was the first time he had ever spent money on another human being.

He put the ticket in an envelope, without any covering message, and, in order not to give himself away, he inscribed the address in the best copper-plate style. While he was standing at the letter-box Mahlmann came up and laughed derisively. Diederich felt that he was discovered and looked earnestly at the hand which he had just withdrawn from the box. But Mahlmann merely announced his intention of having a look at Diederich's quarters. He found that the place looked as if it belonged to an elderly lady. Diederich had actually brought the coffee pot from home! Diederich was hot with shame. When Mahlmann contemptuously opened and shut his chemistry books Diederich was ashamed of the subject he was studying. The man from Mecklenburg plumped down on the sofa and asked: "What do you think of the little Göppel girl? Nice kid, isn't she? Oh, look at him blushing again! Why don't you go after her? I am willing to retire, if it is any satisfaction to you, I have fifteen other strings to my bow."

Diederich made a gesture of indifference:

"I tell you she is worth while, if I am any judge of women. That red hair!—and did you ever notice how she looks at you when she thinks you can't see her?"

"Not at me," said Diederich even more indifferently. "I don't care a damn about it anyhow."

"So much the worse for you!" Mahlmann laughed boisterously. Then he proposed that they should take a stroll, which degenerated into a round of the bars. By the time the street lamps were lit they were both drunk. Later on, in Leipzigerstrasse without any provocation, Mahlmann

gave Diederich a tremendous box on the ear. “Oh,” he said, “you have an infernal ———.” He was afraid to say “cheek.” “All right, old chap, amongst friends, no harm meant,” cried the Mecklenburger, clapping him on the shoulder. And finally he touched Diederich for his last ten marks. … Four days later he found him, weak from hunger, and magnanimously shared with him three marks from what he had meanwhile borrowed elsewhere. On Sunday at Göppel’s—where Diederich would perhaps not have gone if his stomach had not been so empty—Mahlmann explained that Hessling had squandered all his money and would have to eat his fill that day. Herr Göppel and his brother-in-law laughed knowingly, but Deiderich would rather never have been born than meet the sad, inquiring eyes of Agnes. She despised him. In desperation he consoled himself with the thought: “She always did. What does it matter?” Then she asked if it was he who had sent the concert ticket. Every one turned to look at him.

“Nonsense! Why on earth should I have done that?” he returned, so gruffly that they all believed him. Agnes hesitated a little before turning away. Mahlmann offered the ladies sugar-almonds and placed what was left in front of Agnes. Diederich took no notice of her, and ate even more than on the previous occasion. Why not, since they all thought he had come there for no other reason? When some one proposed that they should go out to Grünewald for their coffee, Diederich invented another engagement. He even added: with “some one whom I cannot possibly keep waiting.” Herr Göppel placed his closed hand on his shoulder, smiled at him, with his head a little on one side, and said in an undertone: “Of course you know the invitation includes you.” But Diederich indignantly assured him that had nothing to do with it. “Well, in any case you will come again whenever you feel inclined.” Göppel concluded, and Agnes nodded. She appeared to wish to say something, but Diederich would not wait. He wandered

about for the rest of the day in a state of self-complacent grief, like one who has achieved a great sacrifice. In the evening he sat in an overcrowded beer-room, with his head in his hands, and wagged his head at his solitary glass from time to time, as if he now understood the ways of destiny.

What was he to do against the masterly manner in which Mahlmann accepted his loans? On Sunday the Mecklenburger had brought a bouquet for Agnes, though Diederich, who came with empty hands, might have said: “That is really from me.” Instead of that he was silent, and was more incensed against Agnes than against Mahlmann. The latter commanded his admiration when he ran at night after some passer-by and knocked in his hat—although Diederich was by no means blind to the warning which this procedure contained for himself.

At the end of the month he received for his birthday an unexpected sum of money which his mother had saved up for him, and he arrived at Göppel’s with a bouquet, not so large as to give himself away, or to challenge Mahlmann. As she took it the girl’s face wore an embarrassed expression, and Diederich’s smile was both shy and condescending. That Sunday seemed to him unusually gay and the proposal that they should go to the Zoological Gardens did not surprise him.

The company set out, after Mahlmann had counted them: Eleven persons. Like Göppel’s sisters, all the women they met were dressed quite differently than on week-days, as if they belonged to-day to a higher class, or had come into a legacy. The men wore frock coats, only a few with dark trousers like Diederich, but many had straw hats. The side streets were broad, uniform and empty, not a soul was to be seen, nor any of the usual refuse. In one, however, a group of little girls in white dresses, and black stockings, bedecked with ribbons were singing shrilly and dancing in a ring. Immediately afterwards, in the main thoroughfare, they

came on perspiring matrons storming a bus, and the faces of the shop assistants, who struggled ruthlessly with them for seats, looked so pale beside their strong red cheeks that one would have thought they were going to faint. Every one pushed forward, every one rushed to the one goal where pleasure would begin. On every face was plainly written: “Come on, we have worked enough!”

Diederich became the complete city man for the benefit of the ladies. He captured several seats for them in the tram. One gentleman was on the point of taking the seat when Diederich prevented him by stamping heavily on his foot. “Clumsy fool!” he cried and Diederich answered in appropriate terms. Then it turned out that Herr Göppel knew him, and scarcely had they been introduced when both exhibited the most courtly manners. Neither would sit down lest the other should have to stand.

When they sat down at table in the Zoological Gardens Diederich succeeded in getting beside Agnes—why was everything going so well to-day?—and when she proposed to go and look at the animals immediately after they had had their coffee, he enthusiastically seconded the proposal. He felt wonderfully enterprising. The ladies turned back at the narrow passage between the cages of the wild animals. Diederich offered to accompany Agnes. “Then you’d better take me with you,” said Mahlmann. “If a bar really did break —”

“Then it would not be you who would put it back into its place,” retorted Agnes, as she entered, while Mahlmann burst out laughing. Diederich went after her. He was afraid of the animals who bounded towards him on both sides, without a sound but the noise of their breathing which he felt upon him. And he was afraid of the young girl whose perfume drew him on. When they had gone some distance she turned round and said, “I hate people who boast.”

“Really?” Diederich asked, joyfully moved.

“You are actually nice to-day,” said Agnes; and he: “I always want to be nice.”

“Really?”—and her voice trembled slightly. They looked at one another, each with an expression suggesting that they had not deserved all this. The girl said complainingly:

“I can’t stand the horrible smell of these animals.” Then they went back.

Mahlmann greeted them. “I was curious to see if you were going to give us the slip.” Then he took Diederich aside. “Well, how did you find her? Did you get on all right? Didn’t I tell you that no great arts are required?”

Diederich made no reply.

“I suppose you made a good beginning? Now let me tell you this: I shall be only two more terms in Berlin, then you can take her on after I am gone, but meanwhile, hands off—my little friend!” As he said this, his small head looked malicious on his immense body.

Diederich was dismissed. He had received a terrible fright and did not again venture in Agnes’s neighbourhood. She did not pay much attention to Mahlmann, but shouted over her shoulder: “Father! it is beautiful to-day and I really feel well.”

Herr Göppel took her arm between his two hands, as if he were going to squeeze it tight, but he scarcely touched it. His colourless eyes laughed and filled with tears. When the family had taken its departure, he called his daughter and the two young men, and declared that this was a day which must be celebrated; they would go along down Unter den Linden and afterwards get something to eat.

“Father is getting frivolous!” cried Agnes looking at Diederich. But he kept his eyes fixed on the ground. In the tram he was so clumsy that he got separated far from the others, and in the crowd in Friederichstrasse he walked behind alone with Herr Göppel. Suddenly Göppel stopped,

fumbled nervously at his waistcoat and asked “Where is my watch?”

It had disappeared along with the chain. Mahlmann said: “How long have you been in Berlin, Herr Göppel?”

“Ah, yes,”—Göppel turned to Diederich,—”I have been living here for thirty years, but such a thing has never happened to me before.” Then, with a certain pride: “such a thing couldn’t happen in Netzig at all!”

Now, instead of going to a restaurant, they had to go to the police station and lodge a complaint. Agnes began to cough, and Göppel gave a start. “It would make us too tired after this,” he murmured. With forced good humour he said good-bye to Diederich, who ignored Agnes’s hand, and lifted his hat awkwardly. Suddenly, with surprising agility, he sprang onto a passing bus, before Mahlmann could grasp what was happening. He had escaped. Now the holidays were beginning and he was free of everything. When he got to his house he threw his heaviest chemistry books to the ground with a crash, and he was preparing to send the coffee pot after them. But, hearing the noise of a door, he began at once to gather up everything again. Then he sat down quietly in a corner of the sofa, and wept with his head in his hands. If it had only not been so pleasant before! She had led him into a trap. That’s the way girls were; they led you on solely for the purpose of making fun of you with another fellow. Diederich was deeply conscious that he could not challenge comparison with such a man. He contrasted himself with Mahlmann and would not have understood if any one had preferred him to the other. “How conceited I have been,” he thought. “The girl who falls in love with me must be really stupid.” He had a great fear lest the man from Mecklenburg should come and threaten him more seriously. “I don’t want her at all. If I only could get away!” Next day he sat in deadly suspense with his door bolted. No sooner had his money arrived than he set off on his journey.

His mother, jealous and estranged, asked him what was wrong. He had grown up in such a short time. “Ah yes, the streets of Berlin!”

Diederich grasped at the chance, when she insisted that he should go to a small University and not return to Berlin. His father held that there were two sides to the question. Diederich had to give him a full account of the Göppels. Had he seen the factory? Had he been to his other business friends? Herr Hessling wished Diederich to employ his holidays in learning how paper was made in his father’s workshops. “I am not so young as I used to be, and my old wound has not troubled me so much for a long time as lately.”

Diederich disappeared as soon as he could, in order to wander in the Gäbbelchen wood, or along the stream in the direction of Gohse, and to feel himself one with Nature. This pleasure was now open to him. For the first time it occurred to him that the hills in the background looked sad and seemed full of longing. The sun was Diederich’s warm love and his tears the rain that fell from heaven. He wept a great deal, and even tried to write poetry.

Once when he was in the chemist’s shop his school friend, Gottlieb Hornung, was standing behind the counter. “Yes, I am doing a little compounding here during the summer months,” he explained. He had even succeeded in poisoning himself by mistake, and had twisted himself backwards like an eel. It had been the talk of the town. But he would be going to Berlin in the autumn to set about the thing scientifically. Was there anything doing in Berlin? Delighted with his advantage, Diederich began to brag about his Berlin experiences. “We two will paint the town red,” the chemist vowed.

Diederich was weak enough to agree. The idea of a small university was abandoned. At the end of the summer Diederich returned to Berlin. Hornung had still a few days to practise. Diederich avoided his old room in Tieckstrasse.

From Mahlmann and the Göppels he fled out as far as Gesundbrunnen. There he waited for Hornung. But the latter, who had announced his departure, did not turn up. When he finally did come he was wearing a green yellow and red cap. He had been immediately captured by a fellow-student for a students' corps. Diederich would have to join them also; they were known as the Neo-Teutons, a most select body, said Hornung; there were no less than six pharmacists in it. Diederich concealed his fright Under a mask of contempt, but to no effect. Hornung had spoken about him and he could not let him down; he would have to pay at least one visit.

"Well, only one," he said firmly.

That one visit lasted until Diederich lay under the table and they carried him out. When he had slept it off they took him for the *Frühschoppen* for, although not a member of the corps, he had been admitted to the privilege of drinking with them. This suited him down to the ground. He found himself in the company of a large circle of men, not one of whom interfered with him, or expected anything of him, except that he should drink. Full of thankfulness and good will he raised his glass to every one who invited him. Whether he drank or not, whether he sat or stood, spoke or sang, rarely depended on his own will. Everything was ordered in a loud voice, and if you followed orders you could live at peace with yourself and all the world. When Diederich remembered for the first time not to close the lid of his beer mug, at a certain stage in the ritual, he smiled around at them all, as if his own perfection almost made him feel shy.

That, however, was nothing beside his confident singing. At school Diederich had been one of the best singers, and in his first song book he knew by heart the numbers of the pages where every song could be found. Now he had only to put his finger between the pages of the *Kommersbuch,* which lay in its nail-studded cover in the pool of beer, and he could find before any one else the song which they were

to sing. He would often hang respectfully on the words of the president for a whole evening, in the hope that they would announce his favourite song. Then he would bravely shout: *”Sie wissen den Teufel, was Freiheit heisst.”* Beside him he heard Fatty Delitzsch bellowing, and felt happily lost in the shadow of the low-ceilinged room, decorated in Old German style, with their students’ caps on the wall. Around him was the ring of open mouths, all singing the same songs and drinking the same drinks, and the smell of beer and human bodies, from which the heat drew the beer again in the form of perspiratiqn. He had sunk his personality entirely in,the corps, whose will and brain were his. And he was a real man, who could respect himself, and who had honour, because he belonged to it. Nobody could separate him from it, or get at him individually. Let Mahlmann dare to come there and try it. Twentu men, instead of one Diederich, would stand up to him! Diederich only wished he were there now, he felt so courageous. He should preferably come with Göppel, then they would see what Diederich had become. What a revenge that would be!

He got the greatest sympathy from the most harmless member of the whole crowd, Fatty Delitzsch. There was something deeply soothing about this smooth, white, humorous lump of fat, which inspired confidence. His corpulent body bulged far out over the edge of the chair and rose in a series of rolls, until it reached the edge of the table and rested there, as if it had done its uttermost, incapable of making any further movement other than raising and lowering the beerglass. There Delitzsch was in his element more than any of the others. To see him sitting there was to forget that he had ever stood on his feet. He was constructed for the sole purpose of sitting at the beer table. In any other position his trousers hung loosely and despondently, but now they were filled out and assumed their proper shape. It was only then that his face lit up, bright with the joy of life, and he became witty.

It was a tragedy when a young freshman played a joke on him by taking his glass away. Delitzsch did not move, but his glance, which followed the glass wherever it went, suddenly reflected all the stormy drama of life. In his high-pitched Saxon voice he cried: “For goodness’ sake, man, don’t spill it! Why on earth do you want to take from me the staff of life! That is a low, malicious threat to my very existence, and I could have you jailed for it!”

If the joke lasted too long Delitzsch’s fat cheeks sank in, and he humbled himself beseechingly. But as soon as he got his beer back, how all-embracing was his smile of forgiveness, how he brightened up! Then he would say: “You are a decent devil after all. Your health! Good luck!” He emptied his mug and rattled the lid for more beer.

A few hours later Delitzsch would turn his chair round and go and bend his head over the basin under the water tap. The water would flow, Delitzsch would gurgle chokingly, and a couple of others would rush into the lavatory drawn by the sound. Still a little pale, but with renewed good humour, Delitzsch would draw his chair back to the table.

“Well, that’s better,” he would say; and: “what have you been talking about when I was busy elsewhere? Can you not talk of a damn thing except women? What do I care about women?” And louder: “They are not even worth the price of a stale glass of beer. I say! Bring another!”

Diederich felt he was quite right. He knew women himself and was finished with them. Beer stood for incomparably higher ideals.

Beer! Alcohol! You sat there and could always get more. Beer was homely and true and not like coquettish women. With beer there was nothing to do, to wish and to strive for, as there was with women. Everything came of itself. You swallowed, and already something was accomplished; you were raised to a higher sense of life, and you were a free man, inwardly free. Even if the whole place were surrounded by police, the beer that was swallowed would turn into inner

freedom, and examinations were as good as passed. You were through and had got your degree. In civil life you held an important position and were rich, the head of a great postcard, or toilet-paper, factory. The products of your life's work were in the hands of thousands. From the beer table one spread out over the whole world, realised important connections, and became one with the spirit of the time. Yes, beer raised one so high above oneself that one had a glimpse of deity!

Diederich would have liked to go on like that for years. But the Neo-Teutons would not allow him to. Almost from the very first day they had pointed out to him the moral and material advantages of full membership of the corps. But gradually they set about to catch him in a less indirect fashion. Diederich referred in vain to the fact that he had been admitted to the recognised position of a drinking guest, to which he was accustomed and which he found quite satisfactory. They replied that the aim of the association of students, namely, training in manliness and idealism, could not be fully achieved by mere drinking, important as that was. Diederich shivered, for he knew only too well what was coming. He would have to fight duels! It had always affected him unpleasantly when they had shown him the swordstrokes with their sticks, the strokes which they had taught one another; or when one of them wore a black skull cap on his head and smelt of iodoform. Panic-stricken he now thought: "Why did I stay as their guest and drink with them? Now I can't retreat."

That was true. But his first experience soothed his fears. His body was so carefully padded, his head and eyes so thoroughly protected, that it was impossible for much to happen to him. As he had no reason for not following the rules as willingly and as carefully as when drinking, he learned to fence quicker than the others. The first time he was pinked he felt weak, as the blood trickled down his cheek. Then when the cut was stitched he could have

jumped for joy. He reproached himself for having attributed wicked intentions to his kind adversary. It was that very man, whom he had most feared, who took him under his protection and became his friendliest teacher.

Wiebel was a law student, and that fact alone insured Diederich's submissive respect. It was not without a sense of his own inferiority that he saw the English tweeds in which Wiebel dressed, and the coloured shirts, of which he always wore several in succession, until they all had to go to the laundry. What abashed him most was Wiebel's manners. When the latter drank Diederich's health with a graceful bow, Diederich would almost collapse—the strain giving his face a tortured expression—spill one half of his drink and choke himself with the other. Wiebel spoke with the soft, insolent voice of a feudal lord. "You may say what you will," he was fond of remarking, "good form is not a vain illusion."

When he pronounced the letter "f" in form, he contracted his mouth until it looked like a small, dark mousehole, and emitted the sound slowly and broadly. Every time Diederich was thrilled by so much distinction. Everything about Wiebel seemed exquisite to him: his reddish moustache which grew high up on his lip and his long, curved nails, which curled downwards, not upward as Diederich's did; the strong masculine odour given out by Wiebel, his prominent ears, which heightened the effect of his narrow skull, and the cat-like eyes deeply set in his face. Diederich had always observed these things with a wholehearted feeling of his own unworthiness. But, since Wiebel had spoken to him, and become his protector, Diederich felt as if his right to exist had now been confirmed. If he had had a tail he would have wagged it gratefully. His heart expanded with happy admiration. If his wishes had dared to soar to such heights, he would also have liked to have such a red neck and to perspire constantly. What a dream to be able to whistle like Wiebel.

It was now Diederich’s privilege to serve him; he was his fag. He was always in attendance when Wiebel got up, and got his things for him. As Wiebel was not in the good graces of the landlady, because he was irregular with his rent, Diederich made his coffee and cleaned his boots. In return, he was taken everywhere. When Wiebel wanted privacy Diederich went on guard outside, and he only wished he had his sword with him in order to shoulder it.

Wiebel would have deserved such an attention. The honour of the corps, in which Diederich’s honour and his whole consciousness were rooted, had its finest representative in Wiebel. On behalf of the Neo-Teutons he would fight a duel with any one. He had raised the dignity of the corps, for he was reputed to have once corrected a member of the swellest corps in Germany. He had also a relative in the Emperor Francis Joseph’s second regiment of Grenadier Guards, and every time Wiebel mentioned his cousin, von Klappke, the assembled Neo-Teutons felt flattered, and bowed. Diederich tried to imagine a Wiebel in the uniform of an officer of the Guards, but his imagination reeled before such distinction. Then one day, when he and Gottlieb Hornung were coming highly perfumed from their daily visit to the barber’s, Wiebel was standing at the street corner with a quarter-master. There could be no doubt that it was a quarter-master, and when Wiebel saw them coming he turned his back. They also turned and walked away stiffly and silently, without looking at one another or exchanging any remarks. Each supposed that the other had noticed the resemblance between Wiebel and the quarter-master. Perhaps the others were long since aware of the true state of affairs, but they were all sufficiently conscious of the honour of the Neo-Teutons to hold their tongues and forget what they had seen. The next time Wiebel mentioned “my cousin, von Klappke,” Diederich and Hornung bowed with the others, as flattered as ever.

By this time, Diederich had learned self-control, a sense of good form, *esprit de corps,* and zeal for his superiors. He thought with reluctance and pity of the miserable existence of the common herd, to which he had once belonged. At regularly fixed hours he put in an appearance at Wiebel's lodgings, in the fencing-hall, at the barber's and at *Frühschoppen*. The afternoon walk was a preliminary to the evening's drinking, and every step was taken in common, under supervision and with the observance of prescribed forms and mutual deference, which did not exclude a little playful roughness. A fellow-student, with whom Diederich had hitherto had only official relations, once bumped into him at the door of the lavatory, and although both of them were in a great hurry, neither would take precedence over the other. For a long time they stood bowing and scraping—until suddenly overcome by the same need at the same moment, they burst through the door, charging like two wild boars, and knocked their shoulders together. That was the, beginning of a friendship. Having come together in such human circumstances, they drew nearer also at the official beer-table, drank one another's health and called each other "pig-dog" and "hippopotamus."

The life of the students' corps had also its tragicjside. It demanded sacrifices and taught them to suffer pain and grief with a manly bearing. Delitzsch himself, the source of so much merriment, brought bereavement to the Neo-Teutons. One morning when Wiebel and Diederich came to fetch him, he was standing at his washstand and he said: "Well, are you as thirsty to-day as ever?" Suddenly, before they could reach him he fell down, bringing the crockery with him. Wiebel felt him all over, but Delitzsch did not move again.

"Heart failure," said Wiebel shortly. He walked firmly to the bell. Diederich picked up the broken pieces and dried the floor. Then they carried Delitzsch to his bed. They maintained a strictly disciplined attitude in the face of the