

The Aristocrat



Ernst Weiss

'An iridescent beauty' THOMAS MANN

Ernst Weiss

THE ARISTOCRAT

Boëtius von Orlamünde

Translated, with an afterword, by Martin Chalmers

An Extraordinary Classic

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The Aristocrat

Part One

My name is Boëtius Maria Dagobert von Orlamünde, or rather I call myself Orlamünde. The historic family of Orlamünde died out in the sixteenth century. So Orlamünde is merely a name here. I am descended from another ancient noble family, which I do not wish to mention. Despite my high sounding name I am worth little. My parents also lived in the most wretched circumstances. Did they know it? Did they deceive themselves? They still possessed vestiges of earlier splendour, but they went hungry, and our old servant David with them. Instead, however, of discarding their noble status and taking up a bourgeois profession and in this way drawing the most obvious conclusion from the decline of the once mighty Lords of Orlamünde, they bestowed upon me, their only child, besides the gifts of poverty and frugality, the truly absurd Christian name of Boëtius as well. That was far from all. In their blindness they believed it necessary to give me a "princely" education. First I am educated at home by an old abbé, later my beloved father puts me in a noble boys' college, if I may call it that, an extensive establishment at which the offspring of the houses of pure blood, whom for some reason one will not or cannot educate at home, receive an education in accordance with their rank. This noble boys' college is called Onderkuhle and is situated in eastern Belgium, not far from the frontier.

In my first year I disappear among these young lords as the boy who is at once the smallest, the poorest, the most timid and the most red-haired. Red-haired - as clear as the words are and precisely as they characterise a man externally - is not quite the right expression. It is true that I have the pale blue, watery eyes of most red-haired people. Certainly I have their buttercream complexion sprinkled with reddish brown freckles, the long delicate hands, the angular yet inwardly somehow crooked figure and boneless form, such as many very blond or red-haired youths have, and it is this physical disposition which makes me incapable of elegant dance, of any proper bow, of any "noble bearing". One only has to see with what indescribable clumsiness, stiffness and awkwardness, to the astonishment of the Master of Ceremonies, I receive on my great day my final report from the somewhat trembling, red and puffy hand of the old Headmaster of Onderkuhle; so as not to put me to shame, he looks away with his likewise trembling and slightly glazed eyes, whereas precisely his gaze fixed firmly upon me would have had the power to restore my self-confidence, my healthy, manly posture, my trust in myself and in a world which is, for all its terrors, nevertheless benevolent. No, he looks away, into the corner where the old blue school flags hang. Why a school should own flags has never been clear to me. After all, it neither marches into battle, nor does it number veterans, wounded and D. in its ranks. But the flags are there and the pride of all. The Steward, Master of Ceremonies and teacher of etiquette in one (his name is Garnier), he, who is said to be the child of a Russian bondsman and a French chambermaid and who, despite his apparently quite subordinate rank, commands the whole army of orderlies, servants and functionaries, this man cleans them every morning, before he begins his inspection of the establishment and of our estate. And he does this by rubbing the black flagstuffs with a white silk cloth, and then running his thumb over the old gilded hexagonal shields which are fixed to the flagstuffs with golden nails. The flags themselves he does not clean, because they must look as old and venerable as possible. He must not use a brush, he merely rearranges the folds and lets the blue fringes run through his old "princely", beautiful, ivory coloured, ring adorned fingers.

What are these flags doing in the noble school? What of the alcoholic Headmaster's unsteady gaze at this old gentleman in his buttoned up uniform, which resembles that of a cavalry colonel, but bears even more gold embroidered on it? What am I doing, standing on a platform, no, in front of it, on the

shiny smooth parquet floor? I place my right foot on the podium and in this most ridiculous position in the world receive my report from the hand of the school's senior master who stubbornly looks away. How lacking it all is in reason! Admittedly it is beautiful and arouses nobler feelings in some. Furthermore, this scene does not take place in Germany, Austria or Sweden, the three most rational countries in Europe, but in Catholic Belgium, where appearance is also given its due. And indeed appearance is everything. I, the aristocrat of ancient family and a beggar, my marks, which demonstrate nothing worthy of a mark (for skill in riding, fencing, swimming, gymnastics are not proven by stamped certificates), the Headmaster, who has never smelt powder, in his colonel's uniform, the flags, which one is not allowed to dust, the Steward, who is the real master of the school for he, like so many servants in the world, rules over those who believe they possess power, but who lack the courage to make use of it.

In the school at Onderkühle (in our country its fame is so great that one only needs to say, I was educated at Onderkühle . . .) my dear teachers taught me to ride excellently. There were two riding teachers, one was a graduate of the cavalry course in Brussels, the other a former champion amateur horseman; both were altogether satisfied with me. In riding and fencing my fairly casual posture (people sometimes call it gawky) has probably been of considerable use to me. This posture one looks clumsy, but is by no means so, especially not on the back of a horse. In riding one must not forget that one living body is moving in a degree of harmony with another. The more easily the displacement of weight takes place and the more the rider adapts to the horse, both in his muscular control while sitting in the saddle and in the distribution of weight, in the course of which one must often allow one's feeling to play as if with a pair of goldsmith's scales, the more harmonious are the fundamentally firm paces that result. May I express it quite plainly: when a competent rider sits on a good horse, the rider no more commands the horse than the horse commands him. Both are indissolubly united, one flesh and, for the duration of the riding lesson at least, also one soul.

Now I cannot expect, that from my confused attempt to portray it, the reader has by this point already formed a picture of how I live and how I pass my childhood from my tenth year on. Results: I can ride and drive a carriage, swim, fence, fire pistols, know the principal features of the drill book and their practical application, the basic facts of geography and history are familiar to me. No sport is an effort for me, each one gives me pleasure, but I cannot count properly, nor write quite without errors.

Not without cause did our Master of Ceremonies - whom I earlier described as the issue of a voluntary bondsman and of a French maid - take first place beside our spiritual shepherd. Exercising under the command of a tutor lasts only half an hour each day. Admittedly the Abbé, a very important person in our little state, supervises our conscience, prescribes the usual, for a Catholic believer, exercises and prayers and attaches great importance to regular confession and to our diligence in the religious instruction class. The whole day long, however, from early morning till late evening, we are subject to the gaze of the Master, who has to teach us "the forms". Above all the greeting. All have to file past his person. We are bare-headed. On his coal black hair, which, however, is already flecked with grey at the temples, he is wearing a cap. We must come to a halt three paces from him. "Back, back!" he shouts at us, as if he were afraid we wanted to throw ourselves on him. Now he looks at us with his Slav eyes, so that we make a deep bow. Never deep enough. No royal highness has received so many bows from high aristocrats as he. He plays the ruler for so long, until we see the ruler in him. Answering, remaining silent, allowing precedence, taking precedence, etiquette at table, greeting and leavetaking of those of higher rank, of equal rank, domestics, all refinements of aristocratic intercourse, deportment, spiritual disposition, self-control, tact, ease in giving commands and above all constantly keeping distance and remaining conscious of one's situation - these are the subjects

which he teaches. Hour after hour, at meal times, even when we are sleeping. His slate grey, rather wide set eyes are everywhere. We shall never become masters in his lessons. He acts as if he has grown up with it, and yet it is well known that he spent only one year with Count F. in St Petersburg. The latter, admittedly was the most complete courtier of his time.

To fence well with the foil (an art in which my apparently boneless body renders me most excellent service), is more important, he says, than accumulation of dead knowledge and counting with decimal fractions. For religion the young aristocrat had his father confessor, for politics his king, for the administration of property and finances his bookkeeper. Fundamentally decimal fractions did not exist at all, and even if they did exist, it did not become a man of good family to oversee his servants with regard to such trifles.

That is the character of our education. The Headmaster is a gold-embroidered shadow. The Abbé is always in the beyond, but the Master rules here. My father lives far away.

I could train as a jockey, as a fencing master, so great is my experience. My wrist and my spine (the latter is of the greatest importance) never lose their suppleness. But fencing teacher! What a fanciful profession in an age which no longer knows the duel, the decisive single combat, God's judgement on the tip of the rapier. And jockey? No. The real, the bloody fencing hall of the age now lies elsewhere.

Thus I live in the exclusive college until my eighteenth year; highly respected by all as good horsemen and fencer, even by the morose Russian Master of Ceremonies. If I have no money (one needs money everywhere, even here), then no one mentions it, provided only that otherwise I do not lose name credit - and at least I do not discredit it.

A happy childhood? I cannot complain.

I still remember one day, a drive in the wood. A small stud-farm also belonged to the college. We had more than enough free horses, not all could be used as farm and school horses. The model estate that was attached to the school in Onderkuhle did not yet need all the draught animals, it was before the harvest, the beginning of July perhaps. I was deputising for one of the riding teachers, who was away (when a teacher was sick, he was said to be away), and this honorary office gave me many advantages. I was at this time older than most of the other pupils, was not assigned to any class (of which there were five) and every day expected that it would be suggested to me that I take up a profession and leave Onderkuhle.

The day was all the more beautiful. The stable-boys pulled our honey coloured gig out of the shed, it was a high, two wheeled well sprung trap. We, my friend Titurel and I, harnessed a young little horse not yet three years old, whose delicate, very yielding body did not entirely fill out the girths and bands, but moved in them like a man in a suit that is too large; likewise at home our old servant Davy shrank from year to year inside his violet-ink coloured livery, his coat hung down to his knee and later even further. With him it was old age and end, with our little horse youth and beginning. Now the little horse set off, constantly and unthinkingly turning his head to look at us, sitting back to back in the gig and opening his gleaming mouth to whinny. Since he is inconvenienced by the traces and the bit, the animal rolls out his broad black lips, which are bright red on the inside, giving the head, which remains shaggy despite all the brushing, a comical, boyish, jolly appearance. So the horse trots with us through the park to a nearby lake, which is no longer part of our estate. Do I not say *our* estate, as if a part of it, stables, farm buildings, accounts office, labourers' quarters, wells and horse-ponds, fire-houses, granaries, byres, pigsties, dovecots and the fenced-in space with guinea fowl, peacocks, turkeys, the shed with the ploughs, with the steam threshing machine and the mechanical tedder were my personal property? And yet I own nothing. Not even the whip, which I calmly hold in my hand, without even touching the delicate, trembling skin of the fallow dun with the tip.

We go past the dung-pits at a fast trot, and follow a narrow track into the orchards, where all the blossom has already faded. Yet remnants of white feathery blossom have been left behind on the ground about the black trunks of the apple trees, which are gleaming brightly in the sun, as if varnished. The day is cloudless. No wind. At night only a little dew beneath the magnificent shining moon; we are not wearing any uniform cap (we were all in a kind of uniform, I already mentioned those of the Headmaster and of the school teachers' servant). Only I do not like to remove the cap, for a good reason; but now I hold it between my knees. It crunches when the carriage pitches and sways. Gloves are nevertheless put on, as that is the rule and the Master has his eyes everywhere. Now however, as we leave the boundary of the estate behind, I pull the gloves off, and while the fragile conveyance rocks back and forward at my movement, I tuck the gloves, folded together, the inside facing out, into my friend's breast pocket.

At the bend in the track one catches sight through the bushes of the school building, like a castle built of red brick, the further away one goes, the larger and mightier it seems to become and the higher it seems to soar up from the quite insignificant hill into the clear, shimmering summer afternoon air. Now at a sharp turning in the way it lies behind us, we drive on beneath young lime trees, then the track bends to join an avenue of poplars (called the Italian Avenue), beyond which on both sides there is a fir wood. There is silence, only a cuckoo calls quite far away. The carriage moves so lightly and so fast, the horse steps so regularly and firmly in its too loose harness, that we seem to glide along undisturbed.

the tall malachite green firs as if on rails. To the fragrance of the trees is added the smell of car grease, which drips so copiously from the wheel hubs that the bushes, rowans, sorrel ferns, broom and the tall grey-green docks, shooting up to a giant size in the damp earth, are spattered by it. I glance round and observe my friend engaged in drawing the glove, which I had given him for safekeeping from his pocket, turning it round and raising it to his bare, cropped head, and pressing it against his freckled cheeks, perhaps to test the softness of the leather. But there is not much sense in that; for since the pupils' parents have to supply gloves and caps, though nothing else besides, gloves are for me a very precious, much husbanded article. I know that my father cannot send me more than two or three pairs every year.

I have not yet spoken a single word of him, my Master, my old Master, of whom my heart is even now thinking. I want to see only the earthy, chocolate coloured woodland floor in front of me, smelling cleanly of firs and broom as it unrolls beneath the shiny, polished, sparkling black hooves of the little horse. We're going uphill, towards the little lake. Here stand beech trees and oaks. Amid the bright downy foliage the serious ore-like green of the conifers is sprouting, among which the pale green young shoots on the twigs shine like fruit with an almost dazzling brilliance. A sky of noble blue rises above the entwined crowns of the trees gently trembling in the summer evening wind. Then the track opens out, the outflow of the deep blue lake rushes with a muted swirl over a smoothly polished weir made of white tree trunks to which fluttering algae thin as hair and strips of dark brown fleshy moss have attached themselves. So the completely clear water pours away in two tones, alternating stripes. There is one other object on earth which is similarly striped or checked, if not with such beautiful colours - I say it at last, it is the hair on my head, which through a strange trick of nature has two colours at once, one more yellowish (at the temples), the other more reddish (on the crown). Not everyone notices, perhaps only someone who knows. Perhaps I alone see myself so. As long as I can conceal it, as now beneath the pike coloured uniform cap, which I have put on as if I were shivering in the cooler breath of the water, then I am at ease. But how will things turn out once I have to give up the pale grey cap, return the likewise pike coloured uniform to the Russian bondsman, the master of the house, in order then to step out into life, of whose cruelty my poor father has told me so much, when he visits me here, in all my red-haired ugliness, without knowledge and useful skills?

He is called the Prince, and princely he was from birth, his bearing is without blemish, his disposition noble, his words are well chosen, his dress is of the most unassuming elegance, on leavetaking he gives the servants the largest tips, presents a golden needle with a horseshoe to the orderly who has tidied his room and dusted his shining patent leather shoes. He gives with both hands, he makes presents almost heedlessly, heedless with joy at living here with his son. So, with his nobleman's gait, a calm sovereign power in his slate grey eyes, he makes an appearance in all the splendour and brilliance, like a rich man, like the owner of a great feudal estate, or like a prince of royal blood, who as a cavalry general on a tour of inspection only travels in a special train and never without his adjutants and two valets. If, however, my father has found a moment to be alone with me, how many melancholy things must I hear, how anxious do I become, how humbly do I listen to his refined precepts, which, however, he himself in truth knows cannot be followed. We walk past the school chapel and watch the farmyard birds disporting themselves on the steps. The words "hardships" and "in accordance with one's rank" occur most frequently. We talk unceasingly of the future, without leaving the vicinity of the little place of worship. But what "future" means for me, never becomes quite clear. A life pension, which is not, however, sufficient to live on, only for doing without, is granted my parents by very wealthy relations in Ireland whom no one has ever met. A string of pearls, a combination of both reddish and black gems, the last remnant of a priceless family heirloom, he

been pledged or is to be so - yet this is not easily accomplished in secret, and the world, the public should only know *that* we live, but not *how*. Here his countenance becomes very serious, his long gloved hands reach first for my arm, then for my head, he pulls off my cap and looks at it. He too twenty and more years ago, wore a similar one, happy, aristocratic and carefree - and since he does not wish to cloud my happy, carefree youth, he suddenly falls silent and gives the cap back to me. If he knew how much D. exercises me at this moment - he would speak differently. But he acts as if everything were easy for him, as if he would smile at everything. He opens wide his slate coloured eyes, in which the bright steps of the little chapel with the even smaller hens are reflected in miniature, and now he moistens his thick, somewhat drooping, lips with his tongue. Does he know nothing? Does he not know me? Not know himself? Or is it embarrassment and shame?

It is now six months since the last time my old father was here, I remember precisely, because it was his last visit. But now I do not want to speak of the "last", not of D., however profoundly both are related, not of old, even if he, my dearest father, was then as old as I, thanks to a beautiful D., hoping never to be.

The bridge over the outflow of the lake, across which our little carriage is rocking now, is not so new either. The wood is soft and rotten, it smells of the fungi which flourish in considerable quantities underneath the little bridge and there undermine the decaying woodwork. I drive more slowly, not out of fear that the bridge could give way under our weight, but so that my young horse does not catch its narrow hooves between the wooden beams and stumble.

Strangers pass us, the women wear large greenish-white coifs coming down past their eyes, whose gleam nevertheless twinkles through the holes in the embroidery. The men march in high boots, long beards around their mouths. If one now remembers school lessons amongst the chattering, usually good-natured but often also malicious comrades in Onderkühle and if one now sees the bridge, the lake before one instead of the familiar institution walls, then one glimpses at this moment a long and varied, inexhaustible life before one. Everything is full of hope.

My friend Titurel, who has not yet quite recovered from his last illness (he always finds it so hard to be done with things, including his exercises), owes this afternoon's holiday and the permission for the drive to just this weakness and the need for recovery. As we now leave the lake behind us and at a faster pace proceed along the highway towards the town between fields of potato and beet and watered meadows, his back presses more firmly against me. The gig pitches. Something or other in the spring mechanism has clicked suspiciously. I brake and bring the horse to a stop, and not by pulling the reins, but more by slackening them. I begin to whistle very softly as well, a command which my little horse understands immediately and obeys. I trained him in his time, with a soft coaxing having taught him the first proper paces at the lunge and accustomed him to the completely unfamiliar business which at first was incomprehensible to him.

My friend now slides down from his seat with great rapidity, without reflecting that he thereby pulls up the front of the shaft and does not exactly do the animal's mouth, which is still very soft, any good. Now he stands before me and wants to help me down from my seat. I look around, in case there is another carriage or an automobile coming down the road. Suddenly I feel the ankle of my left foot grasped by Titurel's hand. He holds something soft under my foot, on which I am about to jump down as gently as possible so as not to jerk the fragile carriage too greatly. Now I stand on the ground, in front of me my friend, who has offered me his left hand with my gloves as footrest. Did he wish to render me an especially chivalrous service, as is indicated by a crooked smile on his closed lips? His teeth are bad, out of shame he opens his mouth as little as possible. Consequently he often appears shy, which he is not, ironic rather. But I gave him the gloves for safekeeping, not for chivalrous services. I now see before me my old father, thought of whom I have until now forcibly repressed. I know how difficult it will be for him to afford the money for a new pair. His own, after all, he wears only on "parade", that is on visits to Onderkühle or for important events and state visits at which his presence, that is, his name, is expected. My friend is silent. Presumably he awaits a cordial word from me. I cannot, however control my anger. Without speaking, I take the damp, soiled gloves out of his hand and throw them, as if they had now become quite worthless, over my shoulders into the beet fields behind me. Then I bend down under the carriage and discover that a regulator screw on the right

spring shackle-strap has loosened. I can grip and tighten it with the use of one of my keys.

~~Then we mount and return the same way. Yet it is not the same any more. On the forest track we~~ hear a carriage coming up behind us. Our backs have already separated long ago. We sit there stiff and inattentive, no one, not even the Master of Ceremonies, could find any fault. Bearing is all that he knows, never heart, never feeling. Does he not know D. either? Does he know it? I urge my horse on and do not spare the whip. Nevertheless the other carriage overtakes us. In it sits the Master of Ceremonies, who does not seem to recognise us. He neither expects a greeting, nor does he think of returning ours. Perhaps at this unofficial moment he is not thinking of us, the pupils, but of himself and his "private" riches, which he is said to have accumulated here and which will soon also allow him to buy an estate away from Onderkühle. Whom will he command in Brussels? With heavy lowered eyes, he leans back proud and alone in his carriage. The horses whinny to one another, his also are not old, pure blooded and not yet long together as a team. Now and again the shadow of the trees plays on their leather haunches, on the smooth surfaces of the broad cruppers, shining like ripe chestnuts, and on the sharp angled sides of the neck under the very close trimmed mane. A gentle wind has risen. The light of the setting sun is occasionally obscured. Rain is in the air with the red glow. The cuckoo can no longer be heard. The bridge is very dark and now smells even more strongly of mould and decay. The Bondsman's horses turn their heads towards us. In the big swamp brown eyes of one, I see reflected in the lake or the foliage, half blue, half green, only an illusion, only a moment, a gleam. My horse begins to sweat, and the skin darkens first at the edges of the harness, then the little hairs stick together, stand up in rows, as if they had been groomed with a wide-toothed comb. Now there's a smell, heavy and aromatic, of sweat, of firs, rain and dust.

It was early evening, the boys of the "Fifth" were on the tennis courts, where the balls flew through the twilight, pale against the dark wire nets. Then comes the thud of the balls against the tightly stretched strings of the rackets and the even keeping of the score, in which I recognise the rather plummy voice of young Prince X. (Piggy), who likes to assume this office, but does not like to enter the contest. But when it comes to giving a sleeping pupil a "dousing" at night with a watering can, then he's first to join in. He knows about "flea powder" too and the "Russian lesson". But he himself is always "neutral".

The younger boys are playing croquet on a lawn nearby. Their yelling and laughter is very loud, often drowns out the mallet blows. From time to time one of them also cries out, when a fellow pupil, whether through clumsiness (as he says) or out of malice (as it usually is) or "to put the man to the test", has struck him on the heel or the knee cap with the mallet. I too know this pain. During my first years here I was spared none of these merciless tests which are nevertheless essential for achieving the rank of "man". At home no one punished me. I did not know what physical pain is. Neither did I consider it to be a punishment here, unlike Prince X. I never complained to the teachers or to the Master of Ceremonies about an older and stronger fellow pupil, although at night I often could not sleep with the pain. For there were many tests.

Now the teachers in their light, white undress jackets are resting on the garden chairs, which are covered in red and white striped linen, the clouds from their cigars gather into a blue diadem beneath the tall summer trees. The Russian is already walking back and forward between them and the playing fields, ostensibly to enquire about the teachers' wishes, in reality to keep an eye on everyone, teachers and pupils.

Now we are in the yard by the stables. His horses are already unharnessed. A stable boy (Fredy) rubs down their backs and stomachs with dry straw. Usually they disdain straw altogether, but now they snap at it with their long tongues, pale red like strawberry ice, and show their dark, dully gleaming

ivory coloured teeth, catching the sleeve of the anxiously laughing stable boy as they do so. My horse again opens his mouth to whinny, raising his fine triangular head a little and looking round to the stable entrance. When I look at him, he stands still again, only prancing a little on his front legs. The reins have been looped around the brake handle in a firm knot. I want to help my friend Titarel down from the seat. He is so quiet, quieter than usual. Now he falls into my arms like a lifeless mass, he looks at me with his all too shiny, yellowish eyes, wants to laugh, but only uncontrolled spasms cross his pale, freckled, rather coarse face. He does not complain. He does not show his teeth. He trembles presumably because of a chill, and so, without any special effort, I then take him in my arms although I am smaller than he, and carry him across the yard, where he is received by the duty junior tutor sternly reprimanded, and immediately got over to the infirmary. When I turn around, the carriage is no longer standing in front of the steps, but my little horse has freed himself from the stable lad, he trots around between the buildings, glowing in the evening sun, roguishly flicking his long tail, whinnying unceasingly, capriciously raising and lowering his voice, as if talking to himself. Now he has reached the clipped hedge, which separates the playing fields from the farm buildings, and lets himself go with joyful cries and high jumps across the dark green bushes.

Who would not change places with him? No longer to be Boëtius von Orlamünde, but a three-year-old, strong, completely healthy and beautiful animal, which knows nothing of D., which is completely absorbed by life.

I love animals greatly, but something of this love is envy.

I did not sleep very well during the night that followed, since I was forced to think extremely hard about my father, the creator of my life, and about Titurel, my only friend, and so it happens that in the morning, still drowsy, I stumble as I cross the threshold. This year I no longer live together with the other pupils in one of the large dormitories. There are seven of them, some have already been lying empty for a long time. The house could accommodate more pupils than were there now. The Headmaster, the Abbé and the Master only chose the "purest names" from the many nominations, often only one brother, if three had applied. Supposedly, however, many more pupils were entered in the books - to the advantage of the Master. I have never been able to discover anything certain. It all does not concern me.

Although surplus in the bookkeeping, since not assignable to any school class, I am allowed to live in Onderkuhle, as my family has not yet decided my future. I have been accommodated, for the time being it is said, in a small room, which is adjacent to the dormitory of the fifth class, a narrow, if also high and bright room, which loses much of its cosiness because a quantity of old furniture, bedside tables and tall lecterns is crowded into it. If in the evening one has brought back a few flowers from a walk, then one has to place them on the sloping top of a high desk or put them in water in an old inkwell. The clothes which every pupil must brush himself, lie across a bedside table. If, as sometimes happens one is unable to sleep at night, and wants to reach for a book, one has to pick it out of the depths of a drawer, then take up position at the lectern, and so try to read like a bookkeeper at his desk, in which case the shoulders and the drooping head grow tired more quickly than the legs. The whip, which I have brought to my room, hangs sideways from the desk on a nail which is really intended for rulers. All in all my bedroom looks more like an office, and hence also my deep distaste for it, and hence also in certain connections my deep distaste for offices, counting rooms, clerical work and numbers.

Why, as one of the oldest pupils, who often deputises for the riding and fencing teachers, was I not permitted to feel myself still to be a child, at least in the evenings and at night, and to have my bed in the same row as the other pupils' beds? Does the Master want to make me like him? Am I to be a person requiring respect like him? How infinitely reassuring it would be to hear my comrades breathing beside me, when I cannot sleep. How marvellous it is to pass a last minute in bed in the mornings when the other boys are already leaving theirs and have proceeded, laughing and shouting to the washrooms! How wonderful a cigarette tastes, when the tip, still warm from my neighbour's lips, is put between my lips at night, for the vice of smoking is rife in the senior classes at Onderkuhle but equally also the virtue of comradeship, of sharing everything with one's peers, who together form a large united family. At night we know one another by different means, which we have drawn from our reading (we learn little, but we read much). So my friend, whom I earlier called Titurel, is only so named at night, by day he is bearer of one of the most famous names of Belgium. I am called Tyl, and since the names go together well, we are often mentioned in the same breath. Otherwise my joys are so innocent that the father confessor, who learns of them each Thursday, only imposes the most minor penance for them and trusts without further ado my promise never to commit these sins again. There is a sympathy of such purity between my comrades and myself, that when I have to deputise for a teacher, I completely forget that the boy with the blueish gleaming foil, who now "stands on guard" in front of me on the black carpet in the fencing room and feigns a naive defensive position, or the other one, who stands beside the harnessed but stirrupless and unsaddled horse and waits for a sign from me

to mount - yes, I forget completely that I know this boy, that at night I have slept near him, that I know the taste of his lips and that I have smoked cigarettes still warm from his mouth. By day I know of no Titirel, I am no longer Tyl, I do my duty. I could still easily have been allowed a place among the younger boys this year. The old Bondsman, the Master, however, did not wish it. Everything submits to him, and yet his gaze is not steady, his blood is not noble, his hands are not clean either, he knows everything about him, he knows nothing about me.

I told of the night, of my sleeping badly. It is not the dreams of youth, sick with longing, which wake me, which make me press my ear against the door of the neighbouring dormitory, from which I hear the sounds of the gentle, drawn out breathing of the "Fifth", not with youth's hunger for love do I try to catch their all too quiet conversations, not out of desire for cigarettes or tobacco, to draw in the cigarette smoke, which seeps through the joints, does my open mouth nestle up against the cracks in the door, what excites me is something quiet different. Something else makes me get up and, my shoulder hunched, press myself first against one then against the other useless, tall lectern. It is a feeling that one will not suspect in a seventeen year old. But will one believe that this feeling, which I must name only too soon, has been active in my soul since it was a soul, for as long as I can remember at all? I must name it - but I am afraid even of the words. It is fear of death.

The next morning I leave my room after I have, clumsily enough, washed myself at one of the desks, which has been transformed into a wash stand and after I have again concealed the last letter from my father, already several months old, in the drawer of the bedside table - for there is no other table in this room, no cupboard either, such as the other pupils have - then I step out and on the threshold stumble over a soft but sinewy object. I lift it up, perhaps it is a sandwich wrapped in silver paper, which one of the boys has lost, although I would not know either how - but it is my gloves which yesterday, during the drive, I threw into a beet field. They are cleaned, even if not completely, they are dry; the earth has been removed from the seams, they are serviceable, even if one cannot claim for oneself any particular credit with them. A service has been rendered to me by their return, I cannot deny it, and I am happy to have them again. But has my Titirel not been taken to the infirmary, seriously ill? Was watch not kept at his bed? If he was indeed so foolish, so feverishly and boyishly headstrong, why was he not prevented from leaving his bed, from covering the whole of the long track past the lake during the rainy night? I know the rain poured from the sky, because during the night I had several times put my head out of the window. It made me, the healthy one, shiver, but he had so far overcome fear of the consequences, the dread of D., that out of a spirit of chivalry, in this a true Titirel, he set out on the long road, dragged himself through the beet fields, until he found the gloves again. I can see that they are mine, the initials B. v. O. are marked on the inside in faded violet-reddish ink. Although I have washed the pair of gloves often enough with Venice-soap, these marks will never quite be obliterated. I no longer remember when they were inscribed.

But they remain inscribed like the feeling of death in my soul. Now one knows what it is.

A life that is unceasingly in the power of D., is as good as no life at all. One wants to liberate oneself from it. One wants to forget D., wants to work, one must work after all, since life makes demands, which all submit, even the Orlamündes. If one is successful, one can provide for oneself, for others. One has friends, who are close, who breathe not far away, in their high, spacious bedchambers, one has parents, of whom one can think only with longing, sympathy and with an almost indescribable feeling. This feeling is similar to that which someone has when, in winter, he returns home in the late evening and undresses in comfort before going to bed, and then, suffused with just this indescribable feeling, leans with his back against the warm stove in the room which has been darkened again. The warmth rises almost magically up to the bare neck beside the wide collar of the night shirt. Now one has a sense of the length, of the boundlessness of existence. That is more wonderful than everything else. One breathes so softly, that it is as if one were not breathing. And if the stove now flares up and radiates stronger heat, it is as if it is wrapping the boy standing against it from feet to neck in heavy blankets still warm from the horse's body.

So it would be for me, if I were allowed always to live with my parents, if I were allowed to eat at the same table, if I were allowed to go out riding beside my father in the big public park in Brussels. Our horses would be in step, their heads nod in time, the girths and bands creak. Fine brown dust rises from the bark which covers the paths, as if moles were pushing their heads up from below. The rather pale, drooping lips of the Master (let me call my father the Master, I would so like to see him as great. To know myself small beside him makes me feel happy), the Master's pale reddish lips moisten, since in the rare pleasure of riding his tongue protrudes between his strong, widely spaced teeth. Neither he nor his son say a word. Our eyes cannot see to the end of the avenue stretching away straight as an arrow. It is early morning. It would be our horses' morning exercise. Aside from the high, indescribable pleasure, we would also have the satisfaction of performing a piece of work, of doing something useful, which was also appropriate to our name and our birth. Is there a more modest wish? Can anyone accept the "gift of life" with deeper gratitude? Does anyone see the necessities and superfluities of social being more soberly, if as greatest desire he longs for a simple hour's riding with his father, the impoverished prince without a position, in the avenue of a public park? But the prodigious value of being together with my father exists only for me. What I hope for from this hour with him (in vain, let me say immediately, it is past), it is nothing more than what all other souls always possess and never value. I was an orphan, when my father was still alive.

The most blissful condition is that of the beast, assuming that the stones and breezes are not even more enviable. Yet even the beast, in whose soul one can, even if with difficulty, place oneself, know nothing of D. before it dies. I love horses, I love animals above everything, but something of this love is envy. The closeness of an animal, especially a beautiful, big, strong one, does me good, I bask in its presence. When my glances meet the eyes of the animal, I would like to become the little reflection in the horse's angular pupils, which look as if they are surrounded by crumpled brown vellum, or even to live as a tiny Orlamünde in the satin-lustre eyeball of a cat, stretching and contracting in the light, if it were a breast, that breathes in light and breathes out light.

So deeply would I wish to sink into the existence of an animal and dissolve there, where there is no more D.

For an animal, life is something prodigious. It does not comprehend D. at all, in that it remains forever child, even the most doleful, the most tormented. Even the weariest cab-horse, which has become

so weighed down on its bent knees, that no one who had known him in his youth, as a foal, would recognise him again, even he consists only of life without shadow of death.

In nature, life is hard for every animal, it struggles to find sustenance, but it has its whole strength for that. It behaves as if there were never a time to come, in which it no longer needed to search out its sustenance, because it itself would have become the sustenance of beasts of prey or worms. It seeks out its sexual partners for the first time as if it could anticipate them another thousand times, and goes on until the last time with an equal pleasure, with the same deadly will. So an animal is more faithful and stronger than the most faithful and strongest man and more courageous.

When it enjoys, it enjoys gloriously all the delights of existence. So a cat sleeps on a wheat field which has been harvested, but on which the sun is still shining brightly, after it has filled its stomach with field mice or even with grasshoppers and has drunk the evening dew from a few cupped leaves. The cat lies there, its front paws folded under the calmly breathing breast, as if it were praying for itself. It has curled its tail around itself, as if for warmth. It has closed its eyes, indeed, it cannot get enough darkness and it tucks its rounded head deeper into the folds of skin of the neck. It rests. It is immortal. Is it not more enviable than any man? What is D. to it, what is life, what are father and mother? To me it is enviable, to me, who could never envy any man, even Napoleon. Yes, in its innocence before D. an animal goes still further, even if rarely.

I knew a magnificent tom cat which had the singular habit of going into fire. It was rust red in colour, had luxuriant hair, fluffy around the throat, matted on the belly, a very long neck and extremely strong, arched buttocks, which were, however, almost hidden by the huge brush, thick as a child's arm, which flicked back and forward like a tiger's tail. When I saw the animal for the first time I noticed bald patches. They were round holes almost eaten or stamped out on neck and back, under which the clean, much licked skin shone through bright and pink. We took this to be mange, and did not touch the animal with bare hands, did not, however, stop it from rubbing and purring against the bottom of our trouser legs with its otherwise long-haired, finely rounded back. The tom cat only too gladly flattered my friend and me with its attentions, as if it felt that we, unlike most of the pupils of Onderkühle, liked cats.

One evening in winter we were sitting in our room (actually it is mine only, but it does me good to share it with Titurel), in our dark, well heated room, my many desks gleamed, gently lit up from below. Light also came through the cracks in the door from the neighbouring dormitory, soft delicate lines which were only blocked out when one of our comrades walked across the room, without shoes so that we could see rather than hear him.

Titurel and I, however, were alone, except that our cat had hidden itself away somewhere in the bottom drawers of a very old desk smelling mustily of classroom. We had made a bed for it there from old exercise books, torn gloves and similar rubbish, which seemed to give it particular pleasure even if it did not stay in it long. For there is something else that attracts it. We are talking about horses, examinations, teachers and pupils. Then we hear a strange chattering. The tom cat has come close to the iron fender, then it vigorously flicks its magnificent tail, whose erect hairs shine brightly in the glow of the fire, now the animal stands up on its hind legs. The sight of the strong rust red tom cat with the bare streaked patches on the supple arching back is terrifyingly beautiful, especially when the already blueish mass of light given out by the glowing coals falls on the long shimmering hair. Stretched out in this position the animal looks quite enormous. Titurel and I grasp each other's hands and squeeze tightly as a sign to be quiet and not to disturb the animal. At such moments it is hard for my friend to suppress a hoarse, sardonic laugh. But he understands my wish and forces himself to be silent.

Now that the draught has lessened, the flames have lost something of their brightness, have become blue-green, little clouds the colour of precious stones, more a deep haze than a burning mineral. We both feel its sultry, satiated breath as we kneel, open-mouthed, shoulder pressed against shoulder and neck against neck, in front of the fireplace. I look at my friend and see what, until now, he has always hidden from me, his carious teeth. For a moment he has forgotten them. Mouth gaping he wants to see how a beautiful animal struggles with D. But it affords me an indescribable feeling, a mixture of joy, shock, pity, affection, aversion and brotherliness, to see these yellowish teeth close to my snow white ones. Titurel's teeth have dark, chipped edges and small holes with gold fillings which catch the firelight and sparkle - I tremble when I look at this secret usually hidden from me, something in me grows strong and big, when he, Titurel, becomes small, earthly, mortal and fragile. I am only afraid that he notices and flees from me. For whom do I have here besides him? I have quite forgotten the cry and paid no attention to the harsh, throaty cry, to the reddish shining shadow of the animal as it leapt away - but all the more terribly does fear take me by surprise and cause me to call out loud, when I see my friend thrust his left arm, on which he has pushed the sleeve up to his shoulder, with the speed of lightning into the black mouth of the fireplace, its darkness still spitting sparks, biting back the pain, literally biting it back between his grating teeth. With all his strength he pulls the wretched animal out. In the fireplace it has puffed itself up enormously. It has tensed its muscles to the utmost. It struggles against its rescue, snarling and spitting, its jaw open, its nostrils drawn back and wrinkled. It has to be dragged out, its hind legs firmly held above the knees, and all the time it is crying with its mouth wide open, as if it had been intoxicated by the flames as if by fresh meat, or become inflamed by a bloody carcass somewhere in the wood. It is indeed inflamed, for the stiff, curly, long, thick fur on its back is in several places glowing like paper which burns easily even though it is a little damaged. Now it is silent, but is writhing frantically. Titurel wraps it inside his dressing gown, and in his impatience to stifle the flames and rescue the animal he also pulls out a corner of his white shirt, on which are printed plain aquamarine horseshoes together with crossed whips, and puts the strange patterned piece of linen around the animal, quickly extinguishing the flames.

At my cry the comrades in the dormitory of the "Fifth" have become very quiet. We two, Titurel and I, are afraid that the horrible moaning of the burnt animal, which has to pay for its fire mania with fire wounds, will immediately resound in the silence. But not at all. Certainly the angry lascivious movements of the cat continue so violently underneath the protection of the shirt, that Titurel has to let the animal out. But it seems to triumph over D., over real death.

Who would not wish to change places with such a fearless being? The fire in the hearth flares up again, the voices in the next room grow louder. The cigarette smoke seeps in gently to us.

The tom cat opens its pink red mouth, shows its rough tongue, touched by a little milkiness, and yawns loudly. Purring, it rubs up against our feet, pushing hard against them with its high rounded forehead, and prevents us walking in a straight line to the window and letting out the air which smells sharply of singed fur.

The evening with the fire cat was the last that I spent with Titurel in my small narrow room this winter. Shortly afterwards he became ill, was given leave to go home to recover, and returned to us in late spring not quite healed. He has been brushed by D., one can see it on him.

Now it is perhaps time to say something else that also relates to D., but is quite opposite to it. I have already hinted at it, when I spoke of the fire cat. It made a deep impression on me. More than that there was something about it, for which my soul had already long been prepared and which the fire cat, a courageous, painless, literally fiery animal, which defied suffering, confirmed for me. For there are times in my life when I am so filled with courage and vitality that, no less brave than the fire cat, I would like to throw myself into the flames. At such times I fear no danger, am without hesitation, I live with such fierce enjoyment, with such a complete satisfaction of all lust for life, that anyone who has known me only in the days of D., does not recognise me again. When in these days and nights of D., my wretched person has disappeared and has been nullified, so everything else alive and working, aspiring to in the whole world was also nullified with it. Since yesterday, however, since the little drive to the lake, everything in me has changed.

Now I am on my way to see my sick friend. I breathe so deeply that the silvered buttons of my uniform jacket are pushed out, I step firmly on the gravel path to the infirmary, so that it sounds like the clink of spurs (I never wear spurs, not even when working), I leap up the very bright, blueish-whitewashed stairs to the hospital rooms, throw my pike grey cap on to the bed of the sick Titurel, placing the gloves inside it. I stand by the ivory coloured enamelled sick bed in a military posture, as if I really were the riding master for whom I am deputising. My hand touches Titurel's brow, which is traversed by vertical creases and on which one sees, sharply marked, the cap rim as dividing line between the more and the less tanned part of his freckled face.

Despite the two open windows there is a strong sour smell in the room. But in my delight at life it beats with a force I cannot describe and which I also cannot conceal from him. It is just this will almost painful surge of joy which makes me gentle towards him. What if this strong, sour smell comes from his mouth, nothing holds me back from bending over his drawn face and talking to him as if I were his elder brother. He does not reply. I thank him for the service with the gloves, but while I am speaking I cannot avoid turning my gaze towards his naked feet with their coarse-grained, horse-like toenails. Human feet have always caused me to laugh, they appear to me like caricatures of human hands. No matter how much I try to resist it, a smile, which he understands immediately, crosses my lips. For he turns pale with anger, doubles up his long torso, draws in his knees. He fixes me with his feverish, metallicly glinting eyes and says in an impassive voice, without any trace of intimacy, "Quite superfluous. I am not responsible. The Master of Ceremonies knows your circumstances." And as he presses his lips together, at the same time, with manly self-control, not returning his poor body to the comfortable position, he adds ironically, "You two . . ." but does not finish the sentence. He closes his eyes, pulls a handkerchief from under the pillow, folds it, places it on the night table beside the glass of water, in which the thermometer has been immersed. For him I am no longer there.

Yesterday he sat back to back with me on the gig. He saw the Master, as the latter bent down for my gloves. Today he, Titurel, would gladly have seen me bend down in front of him. Good. But in me there is such a joy in living, such a strong vibration to the ends of my hot and blissfully full veins, that I can feel nothing but joy, even now at the bedside of my only, sick friend. In his sense of injury I feel

his love.

~~I stand up, fetch fresh water for him, put the thermometer back in its metal case, let down the blind~~ as quietly as possible, glance at the temperature curve carefully plotted by the college doctor (he is also our natural history teacher). I look at my Titurel. I take hold of his hands, which feel like a piece of warm meat. My only desire is to treat him like a child, a foolish, ignorant, unfinished, helpless, but greatly loved, being. Too gladly would I like to do something good to him, against which he cannot defend himself. He lies there silently, looks through me.

I am old beyond my years, I always felt it, now I know it. I am very alone here. I always knew, now I understand it. No parents, no family lived with us in Onderkühle. Whom should one love or hate? Can my friend Titurel take the place of a brother for me? Can the Master be a father to me?

Nowhere have I really put down roots. One only puts down roots if one starts out on a career, one earns one's bread by the labour of one's hands. Nobility isolates; who knows that better than I? Work binds.

Now, however, I live carefree in the college, I am not exactly a burden to this rich house.

I am not completely lonely, I am a piece of Onderkühle. I too have a share in the school's blue flag flying in the air, in the air of youth, the breath of boys all around our house, in the tall, beautiful forest stretching to the lake, which is no longer on our land, but already on the neighbouring domain of Squire P., a former pupil of Onderkühle. These are the last days I am allowed to linger here.

Now as I step into the courtyard, paved with red, dry, clean stones, out into the bright sun, there is no trace any more of what I could have called the mark of D.

I feel so young, so strong, that for me at this moment there is no D., and neither for my friends, nor for my loved ones, nor for my father, the old prince with the drooping lower lip, nor for my dear, gentle, shy, playful little mother, nor for my good friend Titurel, for my dear horses, for my teachers, for my fellow pupils, down to the very youngest, whom I hardly know. They have only just entered, they are huddled together, sullen and nervous like young goats, dispirited by homesickness and constant fear of nocturnal "tests". I resolve to touch them with especial tenderness, to treat them gently when fencing, at swimming and riding, when I deputise for the sick riding master.

My freshly washed gloves nestle softly in my hand, they lie warmed beside my cap, which despite the bright sunshine I do not put on. I am no longer ashamed of my unsightly hair, so much am I at home here.

Today the sun radiates something intoxicating, stupefying, it attracts me, it draws me upwards, where among dark, violet clouds, it only shines down all the more brightly, prodigiously and at the same time more comfortingly on me and mine on this unforgettable June day.

In front of the infirmary I meet the Master. He, the most subtle eye, the active will in our house. One cannot even call it presumption, if he has taken over the actual management of all affairs, aside from the teaching of course, for the Colonel (the Headmaster) quite gladly yielded it to him or even forced it on him. Now the Master stands in front of me. Does he take it as a sign of my inner superiority, when I first cover my head with my pike grey cap, in order then to raise it to him with a great sweep? So I, and Orlamünde, stand there bare-headed. He turns to me, bends down, although I am almost the same height as he. First of all he asks me, whether I can devote another year to Onderkuhle College. He takes my silence for assent, which it is. Then comes an important task, about which he begins to speak. Do I dare to take the horse Cyrus on the double lunge, since according to the groom he refuses to submit to any constraint and has already unseated one rider (the least skilful admittedly) with such force that the latter dislocated his shoulder.

At this question I am overcome, I begin to quiver, to tremble inwardly with bliss.

"I am grateful to you," I said, "I shall attempt it." The conversation is at an end, but the Master does not leave me.

He remains standing before me and stares at me; I remain standing before him and stare at the sun.

The sun is bursting out between clouds which have assumed the fatty blackness of negro bodies. But these clouds constantly and fearfully evade the ascending sun and form only a broad, monstrous, sombre corona around the glittering star. The courtyard spreads out around me, as still as the grave. There is an extremely strong, but aromatic, smell of warm, heated stones, faded linden blossoms, oats and refuse, it is as if the sun is enticing the smell out of everything in the strongest possible concentration. Never before in my life have I so hungered for dangers, into which I could throw myself, for pain, in order to withstand it by virtue of my irrepressible, furious vitality. Perhaps other people laugh when they feel something like it inside them, I control my face, I am silent and stop my mouth from moving. I merely stare at the sun, impudently, untiringly, unflinching. Up there the mass of light heaves in a flat, limitless bed. No boundary, no shore can be reached, it rises, it flows, a flood surges down from above the radiant brick-red roofs of the stables, in extravagant fullness it shoots down through the still, crowded, young linden twigs into my wide open eyes. Does one call this dazzlement, if today my eyes are able to catch the sun more clearly than ever before? My eye begins to spin. Wherever it turns, nowhere does it now find anything to fix on to, nowhere a sky any more, nowhere the black pile of clouds, nowhere now the low roof of the stables or the still steeper one of the school building, nor the branches of the trees of the avenue which leads to the lake.

I have quite forgotten what has so often dismayed me, the vast distance, the millions of miles of the avenue stretching from our poor earth to the sun's oceans of light which no human foot walks on. The "insane" temperature of 23,000 degrees which is supposed to reign up there, appears quite insignificant and petty to me now. It reigns over us in the most literal sense, we who hardly dare to raise the humblest glance to the unbearably powerful star. Who is an aristocrat compared to the sun? But now I dare to. No terror strikes me. No pain makes me flinch. No fear whispers to me, "Go and hide!" And yet once, at night, even the mere thought of this vast star was enough to make me, a child, then, feel all the terrors of death and extinction. It was a bright night, snow had fallen. In the semi-darkened room at home I was given up, helpless and defenceless, to the idea of infinity. In vain did my unfinished, long, pale hands clench tightly between the dark *portières* of cheap, prickly velvet. I wanted to get a purchase on something in the bottomless depth of these millions of miles, which opened

up beneath all of us as an unsuspected abyss. For now, at this night hour, the sun is beneath us. All the endlessness of the universe is ready to swallow us up. Indeed, it has already swallowed us up, the emptiness has no end, only our life one day. In vain do I press my feet flat against the lower end of the bed, the coldness is only all the more awful and makes the sleepless, pathetically weak boy shudder.

It was the time when I was still sleeping in the same room as my dear parents, placed between the beds of my father and mother, for we have only one heated bedroom, the other rooms (nine!) are used for visitors. At home, if it is not very cold, a bed is made by our old Flemish servant David on the crescent shaped sofa in the dining room, but on such cold nights as this it is put up for me in the "tempered" bedroom. Excellent is the stove, homely, familiar, never overheated, good to touch.

I, however, have abandoned it; overpowered by tiredness I am abandoned. My hands grasp hold of the fringes of the *portières*, which usually disguise a door, but the thought of D. bursts forth ever more terribly, it grows from inside and is not to be suffocated. What good is it if my parents rest beside me breathing evenly? They have reconciled themselves to everything, they have even accepted the "princely distress", suffer less than the servant David, who has served three generations of Orlamünd. Admittedly he is a Protestant, sectarian and cantankerous, my parents are sensitive, have "understood" too well". So they may also long ago have accepted this dreadfulness of the universe as irrevocable. They have perhaps never been aware of it. Perhaps *I* am the only one who is crushed by the dreadfulness of sun, night, the numberless stars of the sky, like a linden leaf, which a falling rock of 23,000 tons in weight reduces to absolute nothing. But if this rock, this heavy, dead, immeasurable stone has tumbled down upon me, why does it not annihilate me completely with this one blow? Why for the whole of my life to come must I look D. and the absolute nullity of my existence in the eye and yet can never do so?

But today I can do so. Only today do I understand it, on the 19th of June 1913, at eleven a.m., now that I stand high above D., as I stare unprotected at the blazing sun with the greatest degree of optimism. Let it rage and storm, let it overflow, I say to myself, let it bubble over like a pot of milk on the hearth with its light and its heat, it may be larger than I, but not stronger, not today.

Beside the sun's immense body the Master has become a shadow, transparent. My wide open eyes no longer let out the sun, my head begins to sparkle, the reddish strands in my hair are about to burn and the yellowish ones to curl up - or will they turn white at this hour which will never return? I control myself. All mastery begins with self-control. I do not move. May I be burnt up completely by these flames of the sun. So shall the inevitable consume me in the struggle of youth. Better so, than to timorously succumb to D., which with shadowy hands catches even him who tries to hide himself away. All better, than to timorously submit to spiteful death. If one must be the rider and one the horse, then *I* shall ride and not spare the spurs.

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