

Done 4-19-06

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Obviously, Adolf Hitler's later readiness to exterminate humans by the train-load and the gas chamber was not at this time an active longing. If ~~the boy was ready to kill it was one person at a time the boy was ready to~~ ^{might be} ^{but only} ^{of interest to us} contemplate. If I speak, therefore, of a year like 1944, it is to make no direct connection to 1900 in the months after Edmund's death. While it is apparent that I was engaged already, guided by the Maestro, into intensifying the sense, even then, that he, young Adolf Hitler, could yet become a high agent of the gods of death, and in that manner believe that his own end would not be like others, I also find it interesting that in the beginning of 1945, close to

the last few months of his life, he wished to be cremated. The meanest aspect of his life had always been his body, that somewhat foul-smelling flesh towards which Angela often reacted as if his soul were bound to it. Yet, this late in his life, such understanding was false. By then, his soul—by any but our measure—was much more befouled than his torso. Of course it is also true that when one holds the power to select whole ranks and categories of people to be liquidated, one does become an overseer of death and such leaders are in immense need of a very hard shell to their ego, hard enough to feel no intimate horror over the price to one's soul. Most statesmen who become leaders of a country at war have usually risen to such eminence because they had already installed the ability not to suffer sleepless nights when obliged to think of the casualties on the other side. They were ready to call forth any bloody deeds they needed. At their disposal was the mightiest of all our social engines of psychic immunization—patriotism! That is still our most dependable lever upon the masses, although it may yet be replaced by revealed religion which shows every promise of becoming ^aour ~~future~~ weapon of mass destruction.

If these are the conclusions I have come to, I must also warn the reader: Our Maestro detests our biggest thoughts. He speaks of them as vapors. He reminds us to return to more modest matters.

I think that by the end Hitler shared this sentiment. In 1944, one of the worst years of his life, with the war going badly, the Fuehrer, out at his underground retreat in East Prussia—The Wolfschanze—liked to tell his secretaries passing anecdotes over dinner. As, for example, how his father, on many a night, would lay a whipping on him. But, he assured his secretaries, he had been as brave as an American Indian under torture. Never did he make the smallest sound. On he went, regaling the ladies with these modest tales of his heroism. By then, being much more aged than his actual years—fifty-five—Adolf was ready to enjoy the advantages of old age. He delighted in receiving the admiration of women without having to pass through the anxiety of deciding whether he should consider copulating with them. His sexual spirit, so wholly unlike Alois', had never committed itself to seeking the glories or disasters of new fornication. (The fear of embarrassment was prodigious in Adolf and we looked to keep it that way—one more small tool at our command.) Given the sum of the levers and

buttons we had installed in the Fuehrer by then, an earthly companion was not in the least necessary to our aims.

Of course, the story he told the secretaries was a shameless exaggeration. On occasion he would even speak of two hundred strikes delivered by his father's hand, ~~but by then he had been lying routinely for a long time.~~

Once, in the late 1930's, talking to Hans Frank, he told him, "When I was ten or twelve I had to go late at night into this stinking smoke-filled tavern. I made no attempt to spare my father's feelings. I went right up to the table where he sat staring at me doltishly and I shook him. 'Father,' I would say, 'it's time for you to come home. Up you get.' And often I would have to wait for a quarter of an hour or more, pleading and scolding before I could get him to his legs. Then I supported him home. I never felt so horribly ashamed. Oh, Frank, I know what a demon alcohol can be. Because of my father, it was the bane of my youth." Indeed, he told the story so well that Herr Frank even repeated it ^{at} ~~in the course of~~ the Nuremberg trials.

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Actually, Alois happened to be drinking with care. He did not dare to take too much. The fact that Edmund had died and so would not be there to greet him in the morning remained close to unendurable. He would feel as if he had consumed a bowl of ashes in his sleep.

On many an evening, he now needed to be alert because he was going often to the Burger-Abends, and the gentry were certainly more cultivated than himself. So he was not ready to get drunk, not when he needed these people. They could lift him for an hour out of his worst moods. Without such elegant diversion, he would have to spend his night, whether in drink or sober, brooding on the young one's death. And so he became a regular and

was usually present all four nights a week at ^{whatever} ~~whichever~~ was the inn chosen for that date. If, in the beginning, he had been stiff in his entrances and departures, the condition was eased by the quiet compassion he was now being offered. A general courtesy met him when he entered and many offered their warmth when he left. "This is the good side of the gentry," he told himself. At Customs, he had always seen them as chilly in their manner except when they had something to hide. Then they were over-friendly.

What impressed him now was that one of the members present most often at these Burger-Abends was a ^{stet} ~~rabbi~~ named Moriz Friedmann who had been a member of the Austrian District School for ^{eighteen} ~~18~~ years. Alois could see that the other gentry were respectful of Friedmann and this certainly helped to reinforce his notion that humankind could be divided into those who were cultured and those who were not. If a Jew could be acceptable to a Burger-Abend, he told himself, then so could a peasant born into the lowest circumstances, yes, even if it were never to be mentioned, a child born illegitimately to a woman who slept on straw in an abandoned cattle trough. No, he was not about to drink too much on these evenings. Adolf never had

to bring him home drunk. Given the decent welcome the Burger-Abends gave him now, he felt much too much warmth toward them. Indeed, the more he thought about it the more he concluded that he had a right to belong in their society because he, too, like Rabbi ^{stet} Moriz Freedmann, was a special individual. Something like six hundred Jews were living in Linz at this time which, given a population of sixty thousand, meant that there was one such man or woman in one hundred. Most of these Jews came from Bohemia and were actually not as crude as one would expect—so he would have told Klara if she had not supposed he was Jewish. Indeed, many of them were assimilated. They didn't walk around in old caftans smelling of stale places. Many were professionals or manufacturers, and many, like Moriz Freedman, had honorary federal posts. So, yes, they had come from the outside and so had he.

By now, Alois felt (just like Mayrhofer) that the town tavern was too raw. Given his grief, the loud tavern voices could bring him close to tears whenever he thought of Edmund. Of course, he drank more at the tavern—but what an unmanly sight it would be, bursting into tears.

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Adolf entered Middle School in September of 1900, close to eight months after Edmund's death. Provided he was able to pass all his grades over the next four years—no routine matter—he would be out by his fifteenth birthday. His preference had been to attend the Gymnasium with its curriculum focused on the classics and art rather than the Realschule where emphasis would be given to practical disciplines.

Alois and Adolf had discussions concerning this. Sometimes, Klara would sit in the room, sometimes not, but the point at issue was the Gymnasium. Adi felt he could work there to good effect. His talent, he

declared, was for art. Looking to put Alois in a compliant mood, he added that he was also looking forward to studying the classics. Alois was scornful. "The classics? Even, your spelling in German has deteriorated."

Klara spoke up. "Our boy is upset. Naturally, that affects many other things."

"I can appreciate some of his unhappy thoughts," said Alois, "But what you say is neither here nor there. I see no use in trying to enter the Gymnasium when he is not going to prove acceptable." He chose to look into Adolf's eyes. "Since you seem unable these days to speak German all-so-correctly, how, in the name of what your mother calls the Good God, will you do anything with Latin or Greek?"

At this point, Alois chose to speak to him in Latin. Not to test him, but to mock him. Absque labore nihil," said Alois.

"And what does that mean?" asked Klara sharply. How cruel of Alois! He made a show of lighting his pipe, pulling smoke in slowly, then *releasing it* *exhaling* at leisure before he said, "Without labor there is nothing,' is what it means," he said, offering up the smoke with small cultivated puffs of his lower lip. "I would say that applies to one's choice of schooling. The future

for most young men today is likely to be in the technical subjects." He looked into his son's eyes once more as if to confirm what small readiness there would be to study the ancients. "Yes," he said, "in the Gymnasium the students must master their grammar in Latin and in Greek. Those are fine knowledges to acquire. It would give you superiority over others for the rest of your life. But there is nothing without proper labor, and that school, Adolf, is not for you. Nor do you require courses in Ancient History or Philosophy or Art. In very few of them do I believe you would excel. It is better for you, in my opinion, to go to the Realschule. Not only is their practical teaching what you need, but I can help you to get in." (He was thinking of Mayrhofer's assistance.) "The other one will be too unlikely, no matter what efforts I put forth. One look at your spelling and they will send you home."

Alois knew that he could ask some of the Burger gentry for recommendations to the Gymnasium, but to what end? He would lose so much more than he could gain, and to no point or purpose. He sighed.

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Linz was five miles away, and with its sixty thousand inhabitants, the city was twenty times larger than Leonding. A trolley car was available once an hour, but should Adolf miss it, there was a long walk across fields and forest before he reached the Realschule, a most forbidding edifice on dark days.

Each morning, he would be reminded in one or another manner by his father, his mother, or even Angela, that he was the only one left of Alois' sons and so the family must be able to count on him. Klara's homilies about honoring and fearing one's father were back in force, even if he was being

asked to honor such sentiments in the face of Alois' view that he might be bright, but was also spoiled enough to live in danger of becoming useless.

Before long, he came to loathe the Realschule. Gone was the pleasure he had taken in Hafeld, in Lambach, and in Leonding at how he could excel in class. Now when he entered, the dark halls shared the gloom that sat on his chest. He thought often of the day when Alois, weeping over Edmund's death, had come close to suffocating him with the force of his embrace even as he kept repeating, "Now, you are my only hope,"—and such hope was full of tobacco breath. Yet, even as Alois was speaking, it was as if he was offering these words to the air. Could the atmosphere ever believe in such a lie? And this recollection of his father's assertion, so full of misery and mistruth was now attached to the portals of the Realschule.

His classmates, for the most part, came from well-to-do homes. They carried themselves differently from the farm boys and town boys he had known for the last few years, and he did not believe his mother when she told him: "Your father is the second most important man in Leonding. And the first, the mayor, Mayrhofer, is his good friend."

He doubted that their importance reached the city of Linz. No one there seemed to respect where he came from. Why, the Mayor, the most important man in Leonding, also sold vegetables in his store—a most elevated mayor! Adolf had not been in the school for a day before he felt uncultivated. In recess, he overheard two students speaking of the merits of the opera they had been taken to by their parents the night before. That was enough to give him pause, but then he began to think he had also heard a remark about himself: “This Hitler, he comes from the peasants.” It was obvious to him that he was being seen as a dolt who had to walk all the way to school from the provinces. Yes, on rainy days, he could take the trolley, ~~but~~ but only if his parents gave him the pfennigs to afford it. An outlander! So many of these boys from Linz had never even seen Leonding. They probably assumed it was mud-ridden. They certainly had no idea of the beauty of Lambach's monastery. And then he could hardly stay for long after class and make friends with anyone. No, he had to plod back to the Garden house. His mock wars in the forest were possible only now on Saturday. There was no time to train troops or try out new rules of warfare.

Before long he was overcome once again with the thought that he was the person responsible for Edmund's death. Once more, he chose to talk to the trees. But the conversations had become orations. He inveighed against the stupidity of his teachers, and the repulsiveness of their stale clothing. "They are earning a pittance," he said to a stately oak. "It is obvious. They cannot afford to change their linens. Angela should smell these teachers. Then she would respect her brother!" He had other topics. To an old elm, he declared, "It is supposed to be an advanced school, but I can say that it is a stupid place. It is uncouth." He could hear the leaves murmuring in assent. "I have decided to go back to my study of drawing. I will do that at once. I know that I am excellent at capturing every detail of the most interesting buildings in Leonding as well as Linz. When I show these drawings to my parents, even my father approves. He says, 'You are an excellent draftsman.' But then, he must spoil it. He also says, 'You have to learn more about perspective. You have not found the right size for the people who walk in front of your buildings. Some could be eight feet tall, others are Pygmies. You must learn to draw bodies to scale. The people must be in proportion to the size of the building. Can you take into account,

Adolf, whether they are nearer to the eye than is the building? It is a pity you cannot get this right, because your drawing of the edifice, taken by itself, would be an excellent sketch. Then, I could appreciate the accuracy you bring to the most prominent element."

Of course, half-praise from his father was worth more than all of Klara's loving exclamations. It proved his point. Art was worth pursuing, not scholarship. "Scholarly work," he told the next grove of trees, "is pretentious. It is clear to me. That may be why my teachers show a lack of interest in my possibilities. They are snobs. They dance around disgustingly over boys who come from well-to-do families. The air of this school, therefore, has become intolerable to me." What he does not tell the trees is that the only students who will have anything to do with him during recess happen to be the ugliest kids in class, or the stupidest, or the poorest.

He believes in the wisdom of these old trees. They seem as wise to him as full-grown elephants. He would not want them to have a low opinion of young Adolf Hitler. An amputated conscience in one so young is always a work-in-progress, and what is left of the roots can seek approval in unorthodox places.

Some mornings he would wake up late and be obliged to take the train from Leonding to Linz. That bothered Klara. It was not a large expense but it was certainly unnecessary should the sun be out. She had a gnawing sense of loss when money was disbursed heedlessly. It even came down to the pfennings. She used to feel as if coins spent in such a manner fell into a well that was dry at the bottom and so they made an awful clatter when they struck—a blow to your spirit.

In contrast, Adolf had no bad conscience about taking the train whenever he could. Still, on those many mornings when he did have to walk, his route would take him across fine old meadows and he did become interested in the forts on the way, particularly after he learned that these crumbling towers were left over from the earliest years of the ^{nineteenth} ~~19th~~ century when the Austrians had lived in fear that come one year or another, Napoleon was bound to march his armies across the Danube. So, they had built these watchtowers. One morning, thinking of the workers who had put it together and the soldiers who had inhabited it, he became so excited that he had an ejaculation. Afterward, he was languid, but joyous. He was, of course, very late for school and was sent home with a note his mother was

required to sign. She did not know whether to believe him that he had missed the train. For the next few days, however, the pfennigs were available to buy a ticket and travel to school at his ease.

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There was an irony of which Adolf's schoolmates were not aware. Far from being a mud-ridden town, Leonding did have an upper class and they owned fine homes. Indeed, they made up the corps of regulars at the Burger-Abends where the subtle differences of status between various members began to intrigue Alois. He was able to feel something like a geologist who digs through one level of strata, believing that he has acquired substantive knowledge, only to discover another level beneath with relics that confound the previous findings. The study began as a diversion until he recognized that his grief would not dissipate. He must continue to descend into his sorrow, step by step, and all the while he encountered such fearful

confusions on his route that he began to wonder if sanity was in question. For a few moments, he even believed that Edmund had been Fanny's child and so was a true son. He had to clap his hands together to signify that this had to be nonsense.

It was not always so fearful. In time, he began to feel as if he might be recovering from the death, perhaps even recovering his strength, even his public manner. Only not altogether. Not ever. There remained a hole drilled through his heart

Nonetheless, these evenings seemed to be helping him. He needed to hear witty conversation. Occasionally, he was able to display some of his own wit. These were the smartest and best-educated people he had ever known this well socially, and, on good days, he did his best to enjoy it to the hilt, even took undue pleasure from little matters. On one night, for example, the beer had been imported from the town of Rheingau. A splendid beer. He was hardly about to confess to the other regulars how many pissy libations he had rolled around in his gut. And he did listen with high attention on another night when one of the gentry, obviously possessing a comfortable, even superior knowledge of wine, said in passing, "The

British call this Hock. But that is only because the Reisling they like so much comes from Hochheim." Alois had learned to give a self-satisfied nod as if each such bit of culture gained had always been in his possession. One night Silvaner was served in oddly shaped bottles called Bocksbeutel. A round of laughter followed. "Bocksbeutel" meant "Ram's Testicle." Alois' mood lifted sufficiently to wonder whether he should speak up. Who could know more about ram's testicles? Hadn't he once owned a well-endowed pair? Ask the ladies. But he did not dare to speak. He knew the difference between himself and these gentry. Most of them had spent their lives, at least in recent years, being able to stay in bed after the sun was up. Ergo, they were able to eat and drink well into the evening. If it came to it, they could go on to midnight. All those years, he had rarely reached midnight unless he happened to be in a new woman's bed. Sad to say, he might just as well have been a common laborer going to work with a loaf of bread, some liverwurst and a jar of soup. He could see these gentry, now in their retirement, getting up to have a light breakfast—Eggs Benedict!—then a ride around town. After which, they might enjoy a Petit Dejeuner (and these were two French words he had committed to memory after he recognized

they were a reference to lunch, not to dinner.) Often in the late afternoon, these gentry might enter their carriages and drive into Linz with their wives in order to have a five o'clock tea at the Hotel Wolfinger or Der Drei Mohren, founded ~~Yes~~ in 1565. There they would listen to violins. What did he know of that?

Yet, if he had just a little more money to spend, and Klara was not always so concerned with expenses, it might make sense for him to buy a carriage and teach Adolf to take care of the two horses. Another dream to give up. Yes, it would be a rare late afternoon when he would have five o'clock tea at Der Drei Mohren or look at Der Haupt Platz from the lobby of Der Wolfinger, after which a visit to the opera. As he told Klara, such people were the ones in Leonding with the most elevated idea of themselves, the ones who could be described as belonging legitimately to the upper classes. "Forget about Mayrhofer," he told her, "he's a fine fellow but he's not the one I'm talking about. There are all these other people who come from very old families and often have six courses for dinner. I have heard of as many as eight."

Klara remarked, "I could do that for you."

"No, my dear, no," he told her. "I am not even considering such a venture. Because the secret is you can't offer fancy dishes unless you have Nymphenberg porcelain to lay out, or can present Beluga caviar on good Meissen china, or serve French Champagne in proper wine glasses."

"Proper wine glasses?" she asked. To her surprise, she was in some pain listening to him.

"Yes," he said, "fine glasses. They give a ring if you flip your finger on them."

Indeed, he was invited to one of those dinners. He went alone. Klara stayed home to take care of the children. When he came back by the last trolley, Klara remarked that perhaps they should invite these people to their home. After all!

Alois replied, "They have indoor plumbing. Their bathroom is not an outside shed. The door to their bathroom does not have a hole cut into it in the shape of a half-moon. Our new friends, if they were such, would look upon such conditions as irresponsibly . . . droll." He had never used that word before. "No," he went on, "we cannot have guests of that sort. What could I say when they ask, 'Where might I find the water closet?' and I

answer, 'Don't mind the hole. Nobody will peep!' Klara, we are not inviting anyone. They would be shocked to see that we don't get our water by turning a tap."

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Late in January, five months after Adolf has begun his studies at the Realschule, Klara was requested to come to the school

Afterward, on the trolley, her eyes shut tight to control her tears, Klara did not know whether she had the courage to break the news to Alois. They had given her Adolf's report card and his marks were dreadful.

Indeed, when Alois did learn, it came on what was now the second-worst day of the year for him, the first of February. He was trying to be

ready for the anniversary of Edmund's death on the next day, February 2, and in the course of walking through Leonding, trying to think of nothing at all, he encountered Josef Mayrhofer on the street at midday. The Mayor then suggested something most unusual. Rarely did he leave his shop in the care of his assistants unless as Mayor of Leonding tasks were awaiting him in Town Hall, but now he proposed that they go to the tavern for a drink.

Once there, they spoke first of the oncoming weight of this first anniversary. They clasped hands tightly—good men in the grip of sorrowful emotions. Then Mayrhofer did something he had never done before. He said: "You must promise not to punish the messenger."

Alois replied with confidence, "You would never be the bearer of ill tidings," but already he could feel unseemly stirrings in his stomach.

Mayrhofer said, "I must ask you, do you have an older son with your first name. Is that not the case?"

Alois seized the Mayor's forearm so hard that he bruised it. Mayrhofer freed himself with an unhappy smile. "Well," he said, "you have punished the messenger already." He held up a hand. "Enough," he said. "I

have to tell you that your son, Alois-Junior, is in prison now—a report came through today that circulates through the district. . ."

"In prison—? For what is he in prison?"

"Alois, it is for theft."

A low guttural sound emerged. "I cannot believe it," Alois said. He knew it had to be true.

Mayrhofer said, "You can visit him should you so desire."

"Visit him?" says Alois. "I don't think so." His back had broken out in a rash. He was full of sweat. He was on the edge of losing the last of his good manners, but managed instead to speak calmly and ruefully, even, with a dignity that was as externally impressive as it was ~~internally~~ caustic to his insides.

"The hardest thing I ever had to do in my life was to disavow one of my children," he managed to put together. "But, Mayrhofer, you must understand, we are such a good family. My wife and I have been careful to raise them properly. Yet, Junior was the rotten apple in the barrel. Without disowning him, the other children would have suffered. And now the three who are still alive—" he catches himself, but does not sob—"yes, these three

will turn out very well indeed, that much I know. They will be good children, just like yours."

Mayrhofer says, "I thank you. I have good children, yes."

They sit and drink, and Alois begins to think of Fanni and although he considers it highly inappropriate to have such thoughts on such a day, he feels horny. He is certainly at loose ends. Could Fanni be speaking to him from beyond the grave? Was she jeering at him because of Alois-Junior?

That evening, at Klara's insistence, Adolf came forward to show his report card. Alois caught his breath, then said to her, "I must break my vow." Klara had been infuriated earlier, but now, not a little stricken by the expression on Alois' face, she felt as if she were betraying her son, for she said no more at this instant than, "I will not argue."

In tones sufficiently somber to pronounce the onset of a war, Alois stated: "I took a vow with your mother. It was at her request. I said that I would never whip you again. That was a year ago. We were thinking of the tragedy in our family. But now, you can be certain, I will break my vow. That is the only course to take when the vow has been dishonored by the person most protected by it. Come! ^{We} ~~You and I~~ are going to your

bedroom." Once more, he was holding his temper. It broke, however, so soon as he took off his belt and had Adolf across his knee.

At the first lash of the belt, Adolf told himself, "This will be my century. I will not cry out!" The blows were, however, so severe that he began to shriek. Alois had never used a leather strap before. A tongue of flame might as well have been darting out of the leather. He plummeted from one terror into another. His heart began to feel as if it would burst. He did not want to die! Indeed, he did not know what would end him—this scourge upon his buttocks or the galloping leaps of his heart, and at that moment, his father, seriously winded, eased off and stopped, pushed Adolf off his knee and said, "You can stop crying now."

Alois sat back, invaded by his own terror. He had begun to think of Alois-Junior on the ground.

There was no need for a dream-etching. The whipping was engraved in Adolf's memory. In the aftermath, Alois went into his own depression—to live as long as he had, and to be able to feel no confidence in the poor remains of his male line. He even started going to the tavern in the

afternoon—a risky business ~~now~~ Would they hear about it at the Burger-Abends?

But the loss was too great to allow him to wait through the day and have no drink. So, for a time, he went only to the tavern. He no longer looked to dominate conversation, and that was true loss. He could feel in full possession of exceptional powers when dominating a bar with his voice. Now, such transports were without interest for Alois. He even grew tired of drinking in the tavern. "I do not enjoy my beer now that Edmund is gone," he told Mayrhofer.

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Adolf was also suffering. He had dared to show his drawings to ~~his~~^{the} art teacher. His assumption was that the majority of his submissions would be chosen and so he would dominate the cork wall reserved for students' work. He had even rehearsed himself in what might be proper responses for the attention he would receive. He had thought of the quietly confident remarks he could utter, always in the best of taste, while receiving the compliments of his new compatriots. These fine moments would make up for all the former slights. It would also compensate for the poor marks on his first report card. He would yet be prominent in this school.

I must admit that I had a role in the ^{decision} judgment that was to follow.

While Adolf did have talent, it was nothing remarkable—I could see at a glance that he would never be an important artist. (Young Pablo Picasso, for example, was already by 1901 a young man in whom we were most interested.) By contrast, young Adolf Hitler produced drawings that were good enough to hang in his school room.

"Prevent this," was the instruction I received from the Maestro. "The last thing we need is a pumped-up mediocrity of an artist with a sour spirit at his lack of large recognition. Better to put him into a real slump."

I must say I was very much in position to accomplish this. Adolf's art instructor happened to be one of our clients. (Indeed, he bore a close resemblance to the mediocrity described by the Maestro.) So, I had to do no more than inflict a fearful headache on the man by besieging him the night before with an altercation between his rebellious son and his temperamental wife. Adolf's work was seen the next morning through the haze light-shafts of a migraine. None of Adolf's work was tacked to the cork wall.

He could not believe it. In that hour, he withdrew forever from the idea that he would ever look again for success in school. ~~He would be~~ Like Alois-Junior, he would learn to live on his own.

Of course, he would not leave home, no need for that as yet. The thought of Toga-Boy still brought sweat to his back. No, he would have to wait. He would live among others while further developing, unbeknownst to these others, a will of iron.

Such thoughts were reinforced when the author, Karl May, came to town. He revered Karl May more than any writer he had ever read. So when word reached the school that Karl May would give a reading in Linz on Saturday afternoon at the hotel where he was staying, the Roter-Krebs, Adolf, having no money, had to confide in Klara that he wished to go. She saw his desire to hear a famous author as a promising sign for his studies. Moreover, she was still feeling rueful over her implicit collaboration with Alois just before Adolf's last beating, and so she gave him enough to buy a ticket at the rear of the orchestra. Adolf was, however, disappointed by the appearance on stage of Karl May. He might be well dressed, but his appearance was, nonetheless, lacking in elegance, and he was short in

stature. These criticisms ceased, however, so soon as May began to read aloud from his work. He had a rich voice and Adolf wanted to feel ~~and was~~ ~~ready to feel~~ that the spirit of Shatterhand was also speaking from the podium.

On his return home, he did not speak of the evening. He had already sworn his mother to secrecy and he felt no need to hear his father's comments. But later that night, after he went to sleep, Alois, poking through Adolf's pockets on a good retired Customs' Officer's impulse, came across a ticket stub.

Next morning, his father chose to say, "I am not impressed with this Karl May. I hear that he has never been to America and so he makes it all up. In addition, he is a convicted criminal—just like your brother. So, if I were you, I would not save the stub?"

This May have infuriated Adolf even more than the beating. It certainly stimulated the beginning of a number of imaginary conversations between his father and himself. He could not, of course, trust his voice now when disagreeing with Alois, so he engaged in dialogues that could take place entirely within his own mind.

This obliged me to accept a risk. Imaginary conversations can become ~~the equivalent of~~ a mental quicksand, yet his spirits were now so raw that I deemed it necessary to allow him a few triumphs for his ego—even if they were only in fantasy.

The first imaginary conversation took up the subject of those young Czechoslovakians who were now living in Linz. Some were even going to class with him at the Realschule. But Adolf was not certain of his own attitude. He may have been ready to enter his first imaginary conversation with Alois, but he couldn't decide whether to join the pan-German position or, to the contrary, speak favorably of the Czechs.

His teachers were certainly pro-German, and his first impulse was to take up a position against them. However, the teacher's point of view had also been taken over by the German students in the Realschule. As pan-Germans they believed that Austria should belong to Germany. That was equal to saying: Out with the Hapsburgs along with the Hungarians, the Bohemians, the Jews, the Serbs, the Croats, the lot—all of that polluting lot. Good Austrians should become wholly German.

Adolf finally decided to take that side of the argument. His father was no pan-German. He certainly disliked the Prussians. They had, he often said, exhibited intolerable arrogance toward Austrians, yes, he had encountered a good deal of such snobbery when working with German Customs agents in Passau who happened to be Prussian. He had had to deal with them every day. On the eventful evening when he made a full speech at the Burger-Abends, he had even said, "It is not cultured to insist that we Germans are superior to all other races of people. Indeed, we may be, but is it not rudeness to rub the noses of others in our belief? In addition, I would say it is highly impractical. What good is likely to come from such a program?" Then he had repeated his speech to Klara, Angela, and Adolf.

Moreover, there was a Czech named Karl Wesseley who had been, a fellow officer with Alois at Customs in their early years. In the last decade they had hardly seen each other, yet Alois still spoke of him as his oldest and best friend.

That was Adi's guide. He would speak derisively of the Czechs.

Here is the imaginary conversation that resounded in his head with all the force of a loud debate in a public theatre:

ADOLF: Your best friend is a Czech. How can you do that to our family? Czechs are not even worthy of being called stupid. I speak from my experience of the students I know.

ALOIS: You do not know Czechs. They are interesting people. I have heard that Prague is a more beautiful city than Vienna.

ADOLF: Impossible.

ALOIS: You say "impossible" to your father? How can you dare when you have not even seen Vienna?

ADOLF: I can, because I know. You, sir, have no taste.

At that point, the playlet was over. Alois merely stamped his foot and looked absurd. It was all too easy.

For his next imaginary conversation, Adolf scoffed, therefore, at Crown Prince Rudolf.

ADOLF: If I were a prince, I would never commit suicide. How weak! How shameful! Rudolf hurt Austria. We will never be the same. No Prussian would ever do such a thing.

That was not a dialogue but a triumphant monologue. In his mind, Adolf could picture Alois affected by breathlessness, and fury—a wonderful, fury for the son to witness.

I intervened. If these conversations were not to degenerate into self-serving slapstick, then Adolf was obliged to give them depth. He had the tools. He had learned his arguments from newspapers, from authors like Treitschke and Erndt, as well as by way of his father's meanderings at dinner. He was capable of building an argument for Alois as well.

ALOIS: These pan-German Austrians have suffered prodigious defeats in Vienna and in Lower Austria. Even here in Linz, which is already a German city in its sympathies. Yet these Schoenerites are idiots who will never collect many votes here. They will get lots of applause, yes, when they speak to a group of Linzers as young and stupid as boys like yourself, but serious people do not vote with their passions. They vote for their interests. For their bank account, not for their heart. Especially the people in Linz, respectable people who shy away from the vulgarity of extreme change. The Pan-Germans in Linz offer nothing but ridiculous little newspapers that they print and distribute by hand.

The fellows who do this job for them are so poor that their noses run in the cold. You, Adolf, are in such a hurry to support them but do you read their ridiculous offerings? Der Fliegilnzer Blatter—what a weekly! Absurd! Weak! Revolting. Even worse for the Alte-Deutsche Blatter—another weak sister. There are not interesting political people. This is all a cult. Filthy and secret.

ADOLF: You are totally mistaken, Father. I happen to know better. In school, my fellow students are devoted to the Alte Deutche. They love the cornflower, which, as you may even know, is the emblem of the vigorous Schoernerist movement. But perhaps you are ignorant of why students wear the cornflower? It is our way of saying we have German hearts, not Austrian but German, and these hearts dream of a time when we can cross the border back and forth. So, we keep a secret in school. I'll even tell you what it is if you also agree to keep it a secret.

ALOIS: Well, you never offered anything like that before. All right. I must keep it a secret, unpleasant as that is for me.

ADOLF: Well, when they play the Austrian national anthem in school, we do not sing the words we

are supposed to sing. We are in tune with the melody, but we sing "Deutschland uber alles." As you know, or maybe as you do not know even with all your bragging about all you know, these two anthems happen to have the same notes. Which we see as a sign that all along, we Austrians have wanted to become Germans.

Now, the imaginary conversations had become too bloated. So I brought Adolf back to recognizing that if these conversations had been real, Alois would have taken a club to his head.

Adolf, however, continued to do poorly in school. The report card of his first full year which he handed over to his father in June showed a failure in two courses, Mathematics and Natural History. In the year to come, he would have to repeat this first year of class which meant that school would take five years, not four. Poor Alois. He could not muster the energy to give Adolf a beating.

That summer, Adolf was equally depressed, but proceeded to tell himself (with my assistance) that the art of learning was something he comprehended far better than any other student. He had the secret—retain the essentials, ignore the non-essentials. Students were too ready to busy

themselves with the endless study of details. Just like the teachers. They could only recite categories. They were bores. They spoke like parrots. They smiled as if they were truly intelligent whenever a teacher approved of what they said. These were the ones who pulled down the good marks.

He was considerably above such concerns. So he told himself. He was interested in the hidden core of each situation. That was the valuable knowledge for which to search. So he would not bend his mind to the methods others used. That could only damage his brain.

It was imperative to cheer him up. His best amusement these days had become his power to tease Angela. Physically, he was, at last, her equal in strength. So whenever she criticized him, he called her a "stupid goose." For Angela, this was a dreadful term. She would even run to Klara to complain. She hated geese. She had seen them landing in the town pond, and to her, they were filthy. Angela had watched these geese as they crowded up on the banks, leaving their droppings behind them. She was, she told herself, *nota goose but a swan.* ~~more like a swan~~

did I ~~had~~ to allow Adolf one more imaginary conversation. *He proceeded* ~~Encouraged~~

so ~~him~~ to imagine himself *as* a teacher at the Realschule. He dressed in elegant

style and was clear-voiced, incisive, and regarded with admiration for his wit.

ADOLF: Here is the essential, young men. Do not try to remember all the facts of every historical event. ~~That is a discipline many of my colleagues are bound to~~ ^{ins take} ~~a look to impress upon you. I would say to them as well as~~ ^{to you} "Protect yourself. You are swimming in clouded water." ^{Most} ~~Some~~ of these facts you have memorized are no better than debris which contradict other facts ~~you have~~ ~~memorized~~. So, you will be in a state of confusion. I can rescue you from that. The secret is to retain ~~the~~ essentials. ~~That is all. That is exactly it. From there,~~ ^{only} ~~select those few facts which can~~ clarify the issue. ~~But~~ remember—these facts can only be derived from the principles which created them. That is because principles, if wisely chosen, are immortal, and facts, even at their best are unreliable. At worst, they are false and treacherous. So it is that facts must never be allowed to dominate your principles.

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It is time to take another look at the Burger-Abends, for Alois has become a regular, ~~and sometimes goes to all four evenings each week.~~

Usually, one of the Burgers gives a short talk concerning his latest thoughts on fine food, wine, antiques, gardening or cultural matters. Topics of the day are also considered legitimate. One particular night, which grew most lively, the speaker, a portly man, offered the thesis that railway travel had affected some of the most long-established social relations. "Our sense of the world has been turned inside out by the railroads," he declared. "The king of Saxony, for example, is not in favor of such travel. As he put it recently, 'The laborer can now arrive at his destination on the same train as a king.'

This is equal to saying that men who are well-off no longer travel more rapidly than the lower classes. Social disharmony could be an eventual product of all this."

In the discussion period, another member stood up to say, "I agree with my distinguished friend that many of these so-called modern improvements are of dubious value. Pocket watches are certainly a prime example. Anyone can now buy a time piece at a reasonable price. Yet, I still recall a time when it used to be a privilege to carry a fine watch. People in one's employ knew then where to inquire if they needed to learn the time of day. Might I add that in the course of making this inquiry, they would have to take note of the fine quality of your watch and its chain. They would leave your presence respectfully. Now, any roustabout can pull a piece of shoddy out of his pants and declare that his time keeps better than yours. Do you want to hear the worst of it?—sometimes, that is even true."

Laughter followed this remark. "No, gentlemen," the speaker went on, "a cheap watch can be more accurate in this matter than our family pieces which, after all, are cherished because they have been with us for so long."

Another member joined the argument: "Everything you gentlemen said is true, but allow me to demur. I happen to like railway travel. It allows me on any given morning to go to Vienna for the opera. Last month I happened to hear Leo Slezak. That offered the incomparable pleasure of hearing a great tenor offer a special evening of Leider. Afterward, I was able to enjoy my room at the Sacher hotel. Incomparable tortes are served with the morning coffee. Or, if I so decide, I can reserve a seat on a train through the Swiss Alps. Just five years ago, I visited the French Riviera."

"Well," said another, "That must have been an ambitious venture. But I take trains for a more immediate reason. I can keep a better eye on my commercial undertakings in Munich."

One evening, the lecture was on dueling scars—which left Alois wistful even as he listened with full attention to discussions of the best location for the wound, be it the left or right cheek, the chin, or the corner of the lips. He did, however, chime in toward the end by remarking that when he was a young officer in the Customs Service, many of his superiors bore those scars and "we did respect them." He sat down flushed. His remark had contributed little. It would not do to sound lame at the Burger-Abends.

On another occasion, his feelings were hurt by a sportsman (with a prominent dueling scar) who entered into a long conversation with him. The first auto tour from Paris to Vienna had passed recently through Linz, and it was said at the Burger-Abends, that Linz, now the capital of Upper Austria, would soon be recognized throughout Europe as a city of some importance.

The reference to the auto-tour opened, however, a controversial exchange. The man with the dueling scar not only owned a motor car but had been in several races and had indulged himself, as he put it, in a good deal of touring.

Soon, the members were having a debate over the question of whether it was sensible to purchase a car. Alois, silently counting his ^{pension} financial ~~and savings, knew he did not have such resources,~~ ~~resources, had to feel financially barred from entering.~~ Nonetheless, he was pleased to be at this particular evening because no matter how little he could contribute, the sportsman who owned the car had stimulated the most fiery comment. Considering that this was the Burger-Abends, the heat of the to-and-fro approached rude manners. Those who were opposed to automobiles spoke contemptuously of the dust, the mud, the fumes, and, worst of all, the noise. But the man who was giving the speech replied, "Yes, I know—the

fumes of these infernal machines. They are awful to you, but gentlemen, I happen to like the odor. For me, these fumes are an aphrodisiac."

The remark was shocking. Yet,
 He was greeted with hoots and howls but he laughed. "Say what you will," ~~he remarked,~~ "these fumes offer a hint of debauch. And I am not

~~referring to the meaner sorts of debauch.~~" At which he ~~sniffed~~ *daved to* his fingers to

the groans and laughter of the company. *"You all seem to be happy"* "But there you are (with your

carriages, your livery, your stables. Whereas, I look for the unique vivacity of traveling at high speeds."

come off it!"
 "Oh, no," someone called out.

"Not at all,"

"Oh, yes," the speaker replied. "The sense of danger is welcome to me. I even confess that the attention of those many pedestrians who used to admire a fine horse and carriage are now transfixed by the virtues of my iron monster. You would be amazed at how extravagantly I am admired while driving through our streets."

Alois was certainly impressed by this rich sport, especially when he capped his argument by saying, "Yes, to drive an auto does offer risk. But so is it dangerous to rein in a horse who has broken loose. I would rather risk my neck in a motor car than shatter my bones in an over-turned fiacre. Or,

sit on my carriage seat behind some old asthmatic nag of a beast who secretly loathes my guts.”

How they roared at that! Nothing worse than such a horse.

Later, once the debate was over—they had all been drinking happily and were more tipsy than usual—the speaker chose to engage Alois in a conversation whose concealed agenda was soon evident. He began to ask more than a few questions about Custom’s House procedures. Alois was offended that this man who was spending time with him after being so brilliantly full of himself at the podium, had now become too obvious in his motive. “You sound as if you are preparing to cross a few borders,” Alois remarked.

“Indeed I am,” said the Sport. “I am about to. But they do say the English can be the worst.” He made a point of speaking in profile so that Alois might be properly impressed with his dueling scar on the left cheek.

It was a good jagged cicatrix, perfect for a man as handsome and well-possessed of himself as this fellow, but Customs work had offered its own sagacities, and so Alois could distinguish between a genuine scar occasioned by the saber of the dueling partner hacking through the padding on your face

and thereby leaving a bona-fide laceration, as opposed to a self-created dueling scar worked up by some ambitious toad looking to charm the ladies. A fellow like that would use a razor to open a wound on his face and then embed a horse-hair in the gap. That could build the scar up into a welt high enough to dignify the rest of his career.

When well done, such a scar might appear to be authentic, but Alois had already decided that this fellow had almost certainly used a horse-hair. The scar did sit too perfectly on his face.

So, Alois said no more in return than, "We used to be as good as the English when it came to catching any fool who was looking to bring precious objects into Austria without paying duty. Celer et vigilans," added Alois. "That used to be my motto." It was a happy prevarication—he had only memorized the saying before the meeting. Yes, "Quick and watchful." That ought to give the fellow some pause.

"Numquam non paratus," answered the Sport, to which Alois could only smile.

His first act on returning home was to look up the meaning. "Never unprepared." An old Customs wrath came back to him for a moment. How he would like to get his hands on that fellow in the Customs shed.

All the same, Alois was feeling expansive at dinner. The excitement of the discussion was still with him, and as he recounted his final observation on the dueling scars, Adolf did listen avidly. Some day he would have his own motorcar. Perhaps, even, his own dueling scar. Next morning, Adolf was ready to pay attention to the middle-class people he passed on his way to school. Only a few had such marks on their faces. The rest were void of interest for him. Even the government offices of Linz had more to offer for the eye. Yet if he had been the architect, he would have designed these buildings to be more noble. "Yes, someday I will be a great architect," he told himself.

If his need to believe that no one would come near to matching his future ability as an artist and an architect was essential, his vanity would soon suffer from a visit to the opera.

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To Adolf's surprise, there came a night when Alois did take him. The event—they were to hear Lohengrin—had come about by way of an improvement in his report card for February of 1902. During the first half of his second year which, due to his previous failure, was a repeat of the first half of the first year, he did receive a passing grade in every course. There were even favorable remarks on his diligence and conduct. This occasioned Alois to declare, "A very good sign. Once you allow conduct to be your first concern, the rest has been known to follow."

Alois was easing up on his demands. He had been ill. Two months earlier, in December of the previous year, 1901, he had had influenza, which

frightened him. Once again, he felt an overbearing need to be able to improve this recalcitrant son and knew he did not know how.

So, in early February, soon after the second anniversary of Edmund's death, Alois decided to try once again to come a little closer. Having noticed that Adolf listened with intense interest whenever the conversations at the Burger-Abends were described, he was also pleased to see that Adolf would read all the newspapers that had been brought home. Indeed, by virtue of a few remarks Adolf offered at the family table, Alois knew that some of his son's fellow students (obviously from the more well-to-do families) did talk in recess about operas they had attended. Alois decided it was time to take the boy.



I will suggest to the reader that the special attention offered to Adolf from the very instant he was conceived (I am referring to nothing less than our presence in the act), had developed in this boy, soon be thirteen, an understanding of a few human complexities that not even older adolescents were ready to grasp. Adolf could sense that when a person's best and worst motives were in accord—for separate reasons, needless to say, but nonetheless in accord—one could bring forth more striking actions than

one's usual deeds. So, Adolf wondered, then suspected, then knew what his father's second and less generous motive might be.

Before we come to that disclosure, let me add that Alois was usually ready to spoil the best of his good motive. So, now he spoke derogatively of the Linz opera house. "To Linzers," he told Adolf, "this opera house is a splendid building, but if you have spent time in Vienna and know as I do, a true opera house, you will find the performance here not so impressive. Of course, coming from Hafeld and Lambach or even Leonding, I expect that you will feel tonight as if you are hearing high opera. And, indeed, Linz has obtained the right to call itself a city and be proud of its opera house. Nonetheless, what we will hear tonight is in no way equal to Vienna. Adolf, if you prove successful, if you have a career that thrives, then someday, perhaps, you will live in Vienna and will then truly enjoy the heights of musical pleasure."

Alois was pleased with the speech. He had come to the point in his life where he felt that if much else was diminishing, his ability to express himself with the well-rounded phrases of a true Burger-Abender was increasing.

So Adolf was taken to hear his first Wagner in a second-rate opera house. And despite his father's comments, he was, for the most part, engaged at least and more than once, enthralled. If he sneered at the entrance of the great swan who was towing Lohengrin's boat forward from the wings to rescue Elsa (for Adolf could hear the squeak of the boots made by the two men stationed within the swan who were propelling it), he was overcome by Elsa's aria of greeting to Lohengrin. "I see in splendor shining, a knight of glorious mien. . . Heaven has sent him to save me. He shall my champion be."

Tears came to his eyes with love and warmth and adoration for himself, as he thought of being able to mingle among the students who spoke of operatic performances they had attended. So, during intermission, he listened with care to the specific comments of the more impressive looking opera-goers. "How fastidious of Wagner," said one such man to another, "that he uses the violins and woodwinds rather than allowing himself to be trapped by the harp. Wagner knows his celestial sounds. It is as if he is the first to have discovered them. Violins, oboe, and bassoon, yes, and away with the harps."

Yes, thought Adolf, he would repeat this tomorrow at school.

Alois, in turn, was off on his own meditation. Brooding over the skill of the upper classes, he decided that they had a foundation for their good fortune. They were able to obtain proper installations for their sons in the army, ^{or the law} ~~or the church~~. So often, they could be justifiably proud of the achievements of their family. Yet, why conclude that he was not as good as any of them? Granted, he had started from a low place, but he was ready to live with their point of view. They understood that the oldest son, whether truly able or not, must still be ready to fulfill the destiny of the family. That was not only true for the army and the church but for government officials. Bureaucrats, after all, could become ministers of state. That had not been for him, starting at the bottom of the ladder, yet he felt entitled to one certainty. If he had known such advantages of birth, he would have made a fine minister. Now, should Adolf actually become a son worthy of his respect, then why would the boy not be in position to rise beyond his father's considerable achievements? That, as Alois measured it, was also in the conceivability of things. Listening now to this music, so true to his elevated mood, so vaulting, so ambitious, so bold, Alois allowed himself to loose, in

the dark, a few happy tears upon a well-spent life, and oh, now! so finely mingled were these sentiments with Lohengrin's final sounds. Applause! His palms were red from the outburst he gave to this second-rate opera house.

Adolf, however, was not ebullient. Given the power of the last chords, he had plummeted from a high and splendid mood into his familiar despondency.

I would say this is one of our basic problems. We have more than our share of clients who can rise high into the intoxications of their private dreams, but then plummet all the way down to the ugliness of their real condition. So we have developed the ability to calm them when they are too ready to soar beyond their present means. Adolf's excitement at the prospect of becoming a great architect for which he was, by his own measure, immaculately destined, would now collapse. Even as he was soaring up to the empyrean with Wagner, the downfall of his confidence was commencing. Wagner was a genius. That, Adolf had decided instantly and distinctly. Every note spoke to him. But could he say this was also true of himself? Or, was he not a genius after all? Not next to Wagner.

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Going back to Leonding on the last trolley car, Alois was also not happy. Now that he had given Adolf the gift of Lohengrin, he must find a way to present the bill. Would the boy ~~now~~ feel ready to accompany him on a visit to the Custom's House? For months, he had been contemplating each and every reasonable occupation for Adolf to pursue, and had come to the conclusion that the Custom's House remained the best choice. It would, at least, be analogous to entering an esteemed profession from a good family. He must persuade Adolf. The Finanzwach presented the best and most powerful future.

It was an uneasy meditation. Whenever conversation moved in that direction, Adolf would speak of becoming an artist. Alois would then suggest, "You can do both. Without question, you can do both. Have I not done more than one thing in my life?"

Well, there was the boy nodding in gloomy resignation, as if it was obligatory to keep paying homage to a father's repetitions. In time, Alois had ceased speaking of the Custom's Service. The small results obtained left him feeling liverish.

Yet, the small improvement in Adolf's marks did remind Alois that a father must not fail to pick up any hint of a positive change in an adolescent son. He must, therefore, make one more effort to give the boy a worthy life. He must get him to come along on a visit to the Customs House. The architecture of the building, so powerful, would have to impress his Adolf.

On a given night, therefore, Alois gave one of his monologues at the family table and felt that the spirit of the Burger-Abends now enabled him to develop a discourse with more clarity than ever. "There is one fellow in our club who keeps saying, and I must agree it is an interesting opinion, that the gap between the wealthy and the poor is being diminished."

"Is that so?" asks Klara, wishing to come into the conversation.

"Absolutely. We've had fine discussions on this matter. It is due to our railway system. You can be rich or you can be poor—no matter! You travel at the same high speed. Oh, I tell you, and you, children, pay attention to this, you, Angela, and you, Adolf. Remember this prediction: The cities are going to expand and there will be money everywhere. I've heard talk in these evenings at the Burger-Abends of peasants, people so poor that—I will use an expression you are now old enough to understand. There are people so poor that"—he had to whisper the next—"they use their hands to wipe themselves."

"Oh, Daddy!" screamed Angela.

Alois could not resist. "And then they scrape their fingers in the dirt to get them clean."

To which Angela could only scream again, "Oh, Daddy! Oh, Daddy!" but she was laughing at how ready he was to be disgusting, and yet knew her so well.

"Oh," says Alois, "that was the way it used to be. But, now, some of these once impoverished people are smart enough to know what is coming

next. I even hear of peasants who are sharp enough to sell their holdings to men who are planning to build factories there just so soon as the roads come in. And the roads will come. Some of these lowly people are truly gross but, dirty or not, they sell their land for a good deal. If there is one thing true of a peasant it is that he knows nothing if he does not know the value of his land. And the smartest know when the value changes. You cannot cheat a peasant, no way, no way at all."

Possessing this much of the gift of speech, he often became the embodiment of what he was ready to say. So, now he spoke as if he were still a peasant and had never arrived in Hafeld, and had never been bothered at all how the neighboring people laughed at his inadequate knowledge of the land. "Yes," he said, "Everything is racing forward and even the peasants are in this race. But you, Adolf, with your intelligence, well, I've come to the conclusion that you are potentially a very intelligent young man, and will yet be cultured. So I would look to warn you. These changes in society are going to alter the nature of the work we do. You are not the sort who should even begin to think of making a living from horses, from hauling or carrying goods over bad roads. You are not the one to ride

behind Graubart all day while he lets you know what the oats you've fed him have done to his gas/pipes."

"Oh, Daddy!" shrieked Angela.

"But there will soon be no need for that. The railroads will replace such hauling. Clothing factories will push out shoe makers and tailors.

Women who sew well may still retain their occupation on a small scale. This could also be true for tailors. But people like that blacksmith you used to like in Lambach, Adolf, he, too, will soon be gone. Education is coming, and it will take over everything. Even fools will be able to read and write. Of course, and we discuss this often at the Burger-Abends, it is important that not everybody become so educated that we lose all distinction of what it should still mean to be called *Herr Doktor*. Adolf, if you study hard at your school, yes, it is only the Realschule not the Gymnasium, nonetheless, you will be able to go on and become an engineer, may it be, and they will call you, once you get your Ph.D., yes, that will be the day for you and for all of us for then you, too, will be called *Herr Doktor*. I can tell you I would have liked to have been addressed in such a way and thereby enjoy even a higher level of respect in the community than I do now." He held up his hand.

“Although I certainly do not complain. Not at all. But if I had been *Herr Doktor*, your mother would have been called *Frau Doktor* even though she has never seen the entrance gates to a university.” At this point Alois laughed and Klara turned red. “Yes,” said Alois, “It is possible that your interests may turn to business. In my day that was not possible for someone with my origins. But now it is not like it was when I was young. Now, maybe your gift will be for commerce or technology. And yet, I do not really see you as an engineer or a businessman because there is one fault with all such success—you have no time to yourself. A businessman has no peace. He takes his work home with him. So does an engineer. What if his bridge collapses?” Alois paused, took a deep breath, and remarked: “If you should ever decide to work in Customs, your evenings and your weekends will always be there, open to your choice. You will be able to work at your art.”

Despite all, Alois was having his affect. Such talk left Adolf with a nervous stomach. But that was because he was no longer certain whether his father was absolutely a fool, or might have to be listened to. If the latter, then there could be some most miserable choices ahead and nothing but

awful people to live and work among. What if he was not destined to be a great artist or a great architect? What if he was no Wagner? There was one thing that could be said for Customs, and his father had made the point—he could have a separate life after work.

So they did go to the Customs House. Despite all of Alois' locutions, the visit did not succeed. The worst of it was they entered into the main accounting house where all the clerks were working. An unhappy smell came up from the general collection of middle-aged bodies gathered together under gas lamps with eye-shades on their forehead. Adolf hated the odor. It was too much like the air around sweaty feet. Naturally, his father would not mind such aromas. When young, he had made shoes, boots, fancy boots and had to sniff officers' toes during the fitting. No, he, Adolf, would not spend his life in a mausoleum with cubicles full of the old smells of old men sitting on top of each other like monkeys. Of course, they were only middle aged, but to a thirteen-year old, middle-aged men are old.

At the dinner table after the visit, Alois made another attempt. "So many of my colleagues," he said, "grew into such fine friends. I could visit good people all over Upper Austria, men still in Breslau and Passau, yes."



Adolf was wondering where they all might be. He had rarely seen anyone come to visit, not even Karl Wesseley, the often-cited best friend. But Alois went on: "There are so many benefits, yes. The pensions, the time that is there for yourself. I can tell you, security plus a good pension enables a man to avoid all misery in his middle years and even more true in his later years. He does not have to worry about not having enough money. Nothing, I warn you, Adolf, creates more discord in a family than lack of money. That is why our family does not have ugly arguments. There is no need for that."

Since this speech was at the dinner table, Angela, passing behind Alois, could not help herself. She was thinking of the departure of Alois-Junior. No ugly arguments! How could her father speak that way? She stuck out her tongue at his back. Klara saw this, but said nothing. It would be bad enough when Alois came to realize that his fine talk would go for nothing. Indeed, she was correct. As the months went by, Alois gave up the idea of the Customs House. His son was not going to follow decent advice. But it did spoil many a mood.

That summer, worried about his own health, and determined to strengthen his physical condition, his spirits did pick up on hearing of a fine

bargain in the neighborhood. A small coal merchant who lived nearby needed to sell a load to pay off some debts, but customers were all too few in summer. Alois made a very good deal.

He chose, however, to ignore Klara's advice. She told him to hire an assistant to help with the job of getting all that coal down to the cellar bins. He also ignored her second suggestion that he use Adolf. He did not wish to share labor with the boy—they would only have a dispute over his attitude, which was bound to be lazy.

Still, Klara's suggestions did bear some weight. Having succeeded in purchasing the coal at half price, he tried to bargain with the seller. "I expect you," he told him, "to bring it down to the bin," at which point the dealer replied, "Oh, you rich fellows. You are always ready to keep us poor. No, sir, I cannot carry your coal down for you. Not at the price you reduced me to." At which Alois decided to do it himself. "I may not be as rich as you think I am," he told the man, "but I am certainly stronger than I look."

So he did it. To pay the man what he wanted for the last part of the job would take some of the luster from his bargain. So he toted a half-ton of coal all the way from their yard down to the bin. It took two hours up in the

sun and down in the dust of the cellar. Once the job was completed, he keeled over with a hemorrhage.

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For weeks, following Alois' recovery, Adolf would hear the wonder in his mother's voice at how much blood had spurted out of Alois' mouth. That was inflammatory to the boy's spirits. The possibility that his father might die became attached to the excitement he felt about Schoenerer and the Pan-Germans. By now, their ideas were fascinating to him. If natural superiority was a true characteristic of the German heart and the German mind, one could add German blood. The next connection is, at best, metaphorical, but it is true that Alois' prodigious loss of blood did become one of Adolf's intellectual possessions, and a spur to his thoughts. For

blood, as Schoenerer claimed, was the indispensable element in national superiority. Blood was the only true vehicle in historical progress. One blood, therefore—Germany and Austria together! Thinking of how his father's blood had spewed forth, he regretted, even if he could not quite admit it to himself that he had not been there on that occasion. He felt as if he could have verified the thesis then for himself. "All the same," he told himself, "it has to be true. Spirit lives in the blood rather than in the air."

Responding to the Maestro's suggestion, I encouraged him to elaborate on this idea. It posed little difficulty. Adolf was illuminated by the concept. Blood was magic. It could be shared by a people. When he looked at the strongest and most handsome boys in his class, he tingled in those places his groin usually reserved for the forest. When blood charged to his penis, it was blood that he shared with these particular fellow students.

I, of course, was free of attitude on this matter. I was ready to work with German clients who, like Adolf, believed in German blood, but I could be just as effective with Orthodox Jewish clients who believed in the supremacy of Jewish blood. I could also work, and very well indeed, with Jewish clients who were Socialists, or with gentile German Socialists, but

there it was a matter of being comfortable with clients whose emphasis was on the air, the spirit, the intellect—all of those invisible currents and gasses where one hoped to find enlightenment and the security of un-bloody world views. And, of course, I also worked with clients who were Communist and would not have called themselves Reds if they did not, in their fashion, believe in blood. We were always able to work on the beliefs with which our clients had lived. Once established in their prejudices, we could then move to alter their certainties enough to serve our needs. Often we would intensify the hatred such clients felt for all that was opposite to them in other humans.

I could not trace, however, the connections Adolf made between the Pan-Germans and his interest in the death poses of the rats he had succeeded in killing these last two winters. Another metaphor was operative here. Not all of those frozen carcasses were nibbled at by passing dogs and cats, so he could study many by way of their final expression. Often, there had been a good deal of blood issuing forth from so small a creature; sometimes an iced-up puddle lay under their bodies, and such sights were arresting, but he was intrigued by those who looked tortured rather than sardonic or

contemptuous, or outraged. So many sentiments, so many curses. He
wondered ^{what was to be seen} whether similar indications were to be found under the coffin lids
of the ^{dead humans} ~~human bodies~~ in the cemetery. A source of power arose in him at the
thought that the grimaces of these dead rats might yet be of value to him.
~~and~~ ^z he thought often of how Klara had said that the new century would
belong to her Adolf. Much of his dispirit over the breadth of Wagner's
genius began to fade as he hunted rats. Yes, he, too, might be a genius. Who
else would look at the last twistings in the features of dead rats?

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The beatings trailed off. Occasionally, perhaps once a month when Alois thought the boy was becoming too sure of himself, and too impolite in subtle ways towards his mother, and most directly impolite toward Angela, even a hint cocky toward himself, Alois would threaten a beating, but the event had lost all drama and was done with half a heart and half an arm. Once again, the boy was not doing well in his homework, but then to what effect were these valid excuses for a real whipping? Not even a sound would be emitted by Adolf. In turn, Alois had not been able to hide his shortness of breath.

At the Burger-Abends on the night before New Years Eve of 1903, the members allowed themselves a bit more to drink. And after two years of showing up as religiously as any other member, and able by now to recognize many a mood in advance, Alois felt considerably more disturbance in the gathering on this occasion. In the last few weeks over at a town called Budweis in Czechoslovakia, the Imperial Royal Police had not been able to protect German houses from a Czech mob. Indeed, it had been necessary to declare a state of siege in Prague. Yet Budweis was still an Austrian town—or, supposedly so. It did have a German majority on the town council. So, a good deal of discussion was roused in the Burger-Abends and Alois had even heard from Adolf that students in his class whose family came from Prague did not like to be called Bohemians. “I’m solely German,” they would say. “I’m just like you.”

In addition, a number of protests were occasioned in Linz because a Cappucine Monk named Jurichек, a Czech, had been invited to preach in St. Martin’s church and would deliver his sermon in the Czech language in order to collect money for a proposed Czech school. Even at the Burger-

Abends, some began to complain (most incorrectly as it turned out) that before long there would be a Czech invasion of Linz.

Alois was left most uneasy. "If there is a bona-fide Czech uprising," he said, "it could mean the end of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire and yet," as he would murmur to the others, "my best friend is a Czech."

He almost recounted a discussion he had with Karl Wesseley, who passed by on a business trip from Prague to Salzburg, "We Czechs are no problem," Wesseley had told him, and added, "Czechs offer more loyalty to the Emperor than all of you Austrian-Germans who would dissolve the Empire in a moment if you could just link up with the Prussians." Then Wesseley went away—his oldest friend—but they now lived at opposite ends of Austria.

Wesseley's brief visit left Alois, however, in a state of confusion. Contradictory remarks were being voiced by him in recent weeks at the Burger-Abends. First, he would be on one side of the argument, then the other, and he was talking more and more ~~but~~ to less cogent effect. Finally, he was attacked by one of the oldest gentlemen in the club.

Unfortunately, this ~~usually~~^{was} fine elder statesman ~~also happened to be~~ somewhat unbalanced on this occasion. "Herr Alois," he said, "you have been so totally opposed to our poor little local priest who wants to invite poor Czechoslovakian workers to free food kitchens when they are hungry. That does make you sound like a pro-German. 'Get rid of these dirty Czechs,' it seems you are saying. But, I cannot follow you. Your best friend, you tell us, is a Czech. You also say you do not like the Prussians. Yet you make remarks that can only be taken as pro-German. At the same time, you speak of your esteem for Franz Josef. You do not seem to object to the presence of Gypsies and Hungarians and all sorts of more or less mongrel and pampered people in our Empire. Or, do you? Dear Herr Hitler, I hesitate to say this, but I must attribute your confusions to the one affliction we are all in danger of approaching these days, and that is premature old age. You are not an old man yet, not as old as I am, but, my esteemed fellow Burger-Abender, I must say that your confusions if not cleared up will swallow you." And abruptly he sat down as if to apologize for having gone too far.

Unhappily for Alois, the old man had not been inaccurate. Since the lung hemorrhage, Alois had lost some clarity of mind, exactly that clarity of which he had been so proud. Now, many of his thoughts seemed to come into his head for no better purpose than to say the opposite of his previous thoughts. (This was perhaps a reaction to all his years in the Customs Office when his beliefs had to sit in one tightly capped container.) Indeed Alois confessed as much to Wesseley on the last visit, after which he sighed and said, "I like talking to you. In my opinion, you are as deep as the sea."

"Alois, tell the truth. Have you ever seen a large body of water?" asked Wesseley.

"Beautiful lakes I have seen, and plenty. That is enough." He paused. "Whereas now I feel as if I am living in the desert."

A couple of nights after the old member's tirade was visited upon him, Alois could remember that some of the Burger-Abenders had kept nodding their heads in agreement. And Alois did keep hearing the old man's voice: "Your opinions are so much at odds with each other. You say that we give too much to the Czechs and have too little concern for the interests of the local German people, but then I hear you tell us that to be against the

Jews and the Hungarians, or the Czechs is antagonistic to good culture. Do you know that you are too much for me?"

Alois felt so weak after this upbraiding that he had not enough vigor to get up and leave the room. But then he found such strength. Not often did members walk out of the Burger-Abends in such a manner, but on this occasion it became an imperative, and he was damned to how weak he felt.

He was furious. It seemed undeniably clear to him that he had merely been tolerated at the Burger-Abends. Did they laugh among themselves afterwards at remarks he made? Was it like that? Had he been their resident fool?

It gave him a frightful headache. ^{Five}~~Several~~ days later, on January 3, he was dead before noon.