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Beneath the Wheel

Unterm Rad

Hermann Hesse

1906

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Translated from the German by Ether Library

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A Novel

Original title · *Unterm Rad*

Hermann Hesse (1877–1962)

Translated from the German by Ether Library

First published in 1906 by S. Fischer Verlag, Berlin.

A Note on the Translation

This is a complete translation of Hermann Hesse's novel *Unterm Rad*, made directly from the German. No earlier English version was used as its basis. The source is a public-domain transcription of the S. Fischer edition, in which the transcriber corrected seven misprints; those corrections are kept.

The German title means "under the wheel." The phrase occurs once in the book, when the ephorus of the seminary warns Hans not to let himself grow weary, "or you'll end up beneath the wheel." English readers have known the novel as *Beneath the Wheel*, and once as *The Prodigy*; we keep the first, because it keeps Hesse's image, and we render the ephorus's warning so that the title's words return in it.

A few words carry the book and are rendered the same way throughout. *Matt*, the word of the ephorus's warning and of the old song Hans hums to himself in chapter five, is always *weary*; *Kopfweh*, Hans's companion from his schooldays on, is always *headache*. The *Landexamen* is the state examination, the competitive examination by which the boys of Württemberg entered the seminaries; the head of the seminary is the *ephorus*, and the head of the Latin school at home is the *rector*. The rooms of the seminary keep the names Hesse gives them: Hellas, Athens, Sparta, the Forum. Where the story turns on the German forms of address, *Sie* for a grown man and *du* among friends, the German word is kept in italics and its sense given in the sentence.

The narrator sometimes steps out of the story to comment in the present tense; those passages stay in the present tense. Hesse's long sentences stay long, and the irony in his praise of teachers and pastors is rendered straight, as he wrote it. The Swabian speech of the townspeople is given in plain colloquial English, without imitating any regional dialect.

The book has seven chapters. Each of the 895 paragraphs of the original appears here as one paragraph, including the scene breaks and the three songs. Spelling and punctuation are American. There are no translator's

notes; where a reader needs a fact, such as what Sedan Day was, a word or two in the sentence supplies it.

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Chapter One

Mr. Joseph Giebenrath, middleman and agent, was distinguished from his fellow citizens by no merits or peculiarities whatever. Like them he possessed a broad, healthy figure, a passable talent for business, joined to a sincere and heartfelt reverence for money, and in addition a small house with a little garden, a family grave in the cemetery, a churchgoing piety that had become somewhat enlightened and threadbare, a proper respect for God and the authorities, and a blind submission to the iron commandments of middle-class respectability. He drank many a glass but was never drunk. On the side he undertook many a deal that was not quite above reproach, but he never carried one beyond the limits of what was formally allowed. He called poorer people starvelings and richer people show-offs. He was a member of the citizens' club and took part every Friday in the bowling at the Eagle, and also in every baking day, as well as in the feasts of pickled tripe and the sausage-soup suppers at hog-killing time. For work he smoked cheap cigars, and after dinner and on Sundays a finer brand.

His inner life was that of the philistine. What little feeling he possessed had long since gathered dust, and consisted of little more than a traditional, gruff sense of family, a pride in his own son, and an occasional mood for giving to the poor. His mental gifts did not go beyond an inborn and strictly limited shrewdness and a knack for figures. His reading was confined to the newspaper, and to meet his need for the pleasures of art the citizens' club's yearly amateur theatricals sufficed, with a visit to a circus now and then.

He could have exchanged name and house with any neighbor at all without anything being different. Even the deepest thing in his soul, the sleepless distrust of every superior force and personality and the instinctive hostility, grown out of envy, toward everything out of the ordinary, freer, finer, more spiritual, he shared with all the other fathers of families in the town.

Enough of him. Only a profound ironist would be equal to depicting this shallow life and its unconscious tragedy. But this man had an only son, and it is of him that we have to speak.

Hans Giebenrath was without doubt a gifted child; one had only to look at him to see how fine and set apart he went about among the others. The little Black Forest town did not otherwise produce such figures; no one had ever come out of it who had had a vision or an influence reaching beyond the narrowest limits. God knows where the boy got his earnest eyes and his intelligent forehead and the fineness of his walk. From his mother, perhaps? She had been dead for years, and in her lifetime no one had noticed anything remarkable about her except that she had always been sickly and careworn. The father did not come into consideration. So the mysterious spark from above had really leaped, for once, into the old town, which in its eight or nine centuries had brought forth so many capable citizens but never yet a talent or a genius.

A subtle observer with a modern training, remembering the frail mother and the considerable age of the family, might have spoken of a hypertrophy of the intellect as a symptom of incipient degeneration. But the town was fortunate enough to harbor no people of that sort, and only the younger and more clever among the officials and schoolmasters had some uncertain notion, from magazine articles, of the existence of the "modern man." One could still live there and be educated without knowing the speeches of Zarathustra; marriages were sound and often happy, and the whole of life had an incurably old-fashioned air. The snug,

well-to-do citizens, a number of whom had risen in the last twenty years from craftsmen to manufacturers, did take off their hats to the officials and seek their company, but among themselves they called them starvelings and pen pushers. Strangely enough, they knew no higher ambition than to let their sons study, if possible, and become officials. Unfortunately this almost always remained a lovely, unfulfilled dream, for the younger generation mostly got through the Latin school only with much groaning and with being kept back a year more than once.

About Hans Giebenrath's gifts there was no doubt. The teachers, the rector, the neighbors, the town pastor, his schoolmates, and everyone else agreed that the boy had a fine head and was something special altogether. With that his future was decided and settled. For in the Swabian lands there is only a single narrow path for gifted boys, unless their parents happen to be rich: through the state examination into the seminary, from there to the theological college at Tübingen, the Stift, and from there either into the pulpit or onto the lecturer's platform. Year after year three or four dozen sons of the land set out on this quiet, safe road, thin, overworked boys newly confirmed, pass at the state's expense through the various fields of humanistic learning, and eight or nine years later begin the second, usually longer part of their life's journey, on which they are to pay back to the state the benefits they have received.

In a few weeks the "state examination" was to take place again. That is the name of the yearly hecatomb at which "the state" selects the intellectual flower of the land, and during which the sighs, prayers, and wishes of numerous families in towns and villages are turned toward the capital, in whose lap the examination is held.

Hans Giebenrath was the only candidate the little town intended to send into the painful competition. The honor was

great, but he had by no means received it for nothing. The school lessons, which lasted every day until four o'clock, were followed by an extra lesson in Greek with the rector; at six the town pastor was then kind enough to give a review hour in Latin and religion; and twice a week, after supper, there was an hour's further instruction with the mathematics teacher. In Greek the chief weight, after the irregular verbs, was laid on the variety of sentence connections to be expressed by the particles; in Latin the thing was to be clear and terse in style and above all to know the many fine points of prosody; in mathematics the main emphasis was placed on complicated problems of proportion. These, as the teacher often stressed, were apparently of no value for later study and life, but only apparently. In reality they were very important, indeed more important than many of the main subjects, for they train the logical faculties and are the foundation of all clear, sober, and successful thinking.

So that there should be no mental overload, however, and so that the feelings should not be forgotten and wither away over the exercises of the intellect, Hans was allowed to attend the confirmation class every morning an hour before school began, where out of Brenz's catechism, and out of the stimulating memorization and recitation of its questions and answers, a refreshing breath of religious life passed into the youthful souls. Unfortunately he spoiled these restorative hours for himself and robbed himself of their blessing. He secretly laid sheets of paper with writing on them in his catechism, Greek and Latin vocabulary or exercises, and occupied himself almost the whole hour with these worldly studies. Yet his conscience was at least not so dulled that he did not feel a constant painful uncertainty and a faint sense of fear as he did so. When the dean came near him, or even called his name, he started timidly each time, and when he had to give an answer his forehead was wet with sweat and his heart was pounding. But

the answers were faultlessly correct, the pronunciation too, and the dean set great store by that.

The assignments, for writing or memorizing, for review and preparation, that piled up from lesson to lesson during the day, could then be done at home late in the evening by cozy lamplight. This quiet work, so beneficially sheltered by domestic peace, to which the form master ascribed a particularly deep and helpful effect, lasted on Tuesdays and Saturdays usually only until about ten o'clock, but otherwise until eleven, until twelve, and now and then past that. His father grumbled a little over the boundless use of lamp oil, but still looked upon this studying with complacent pride. For any leisure hours, and for the Sundays, which after all make up the seventh part of our lives, the reading of a few authors not read in school and an ample review of grammar were urgently recommended.

"In moderation, of course, in moderation! Going for a walk once or twice a week is necessary and does wonders. In fine weather you can take a book outdoors with you, too—you'll see how easily and cheerfully you learn out there in the fresh air. And in general, head up!"

So Hans kept his head up as well as he could, from now on used his walks for studying too, and went about quietly and timidly with a face worn from lack of sleep and tired eyes ringed with blue.

"What do you think of Giebenrath? He'll get through, won't he?" the form master said to the rector one day.

"He will, he will," the rector cried out happily. "He's one of the really clever ones; just look at him, why, he looks positively spiritual."

In the last week the spirituality had become striking. In the pretty, delicate boy's face burned deep-set, restless eyes with a dull glow; on the handsome forehead fine lines twitched that

betrayed intellect; and the arms and hands, thin and gaunt in any case, hung down with a weary grace that recalled Botticelli.

Now the time had come. Early tomorrow he was to travel with his father to Stuttgart and show there, in the state examination, whether he was worthy to enter through the narrow monastery gate of the seminary. He had just paid his farewell call on the rector.

“This evening,” the dreaded ruler said at the end, with unusual gentleness, “you’re not to do any more work. Promise me. You must be absolutely fresh when you present yourself in Stuttgart tomorrow. Go for a walk for an hour, and afterward go to bed in good time. Young people must have their sleep.”

Hans was astonished to meet with so much kindness instead of the dreaded mass of advice, and stepped out of the schoolhouse with a breath of relief. The great lindens on the church hill gleamed dully in the hot sunlight of late afternoon; in the market square both big fountains splashed and sparkled; over the irregular line of the roofs the near, blue-black fir-covered mountains looked in. The boy felt as if he had not seen all this for a long time, and everything seemed to him unusually beautiful and inviting. He had a headache, it was true, but today he did not have to study anything more.

Slowly he strolled across the market square, past the old town hall, through Market Street and past the cutler’s shop to the old bridge. There he wandered back and forth for a while and finally sat down on the broad parapet. For weeks and months he had walked past here four times every day and had had no eye for the little Gothic chapel on the bridge, nor for the river, nor for the sluice gate, the weir, and the mill, not even for the bathing meadow and the willow-lined banks, where one tanners’ yard lay next to another, where the river stood deep, green, and still as a

lake, and where the curved, pointed willow branches hung down into the water.

Now he remembered again how many half days and whole days he had spent here, how often he had swum and dived and rowed and fished here. Oh, the fishing! He had almost unlearned and forgotten that too, and last year he had cried so bitterly when it was forbidden him, because of the work for the examination. Fishing! That had been the best thing in all the long years of school. Standing in the thin shade of the willows, the nearby roar of the mill weirs, the deep, quiet water! And the play of light on the river, the gentle swaying of the long rod, the excitement of the bite and the pull, and the peculiar joy when you held a cool, fat, wriggling fish in your hand!

He had pulled out many a juicy carp, after all, and whitefish and barbel, and now and then a delicate tench, too, or one of the small, rare, beautifully colored minnows. For a long time he gazed over the water, and at the sight of the whole green bend of the river he grew thoughtful and sad and felt the lovely, free, wild joys of boyhood lying so far behind him. Mechanically he took a piece of bread out of his pocket, formed big and little balls out of it, threw them into the water, and watched how they sank and were snapped up by the fish. First came the tiny goldfins and bleak, greedily ate the smaller pieces, and pushed the big ones ahead of them in zigzags with hungry snouts. Then, slowly and cautiously, a larger whitefish approached, its dark, broad back standing out faintly against the bottom, sailed deliberately around the ball of bread, and then let it vanish into its suddenly opened round mouth. From the sluggishly flowing water a moist, warm smell rose up; a few bright clouds were mirrored indistinctly in the green surface; in the mill the circular saw groaned, and the two weirs roared coolly and deeply into each other. The boy thought of confirmation Sunday, which had been only recently, and on which

he had caught himself memorizing a Greek verb in the midst of all the solemnity and emotion. Lately it had often happened to him at other times too that his thoughts got mixed up, and that in school he kept thinking, instead of about the work in front of him, about the work before it or one still to come. A fine examination it was going to be!

Absently he got up from his seat and could not decide where to go. He started violently when a strong hand took hold of his shoulder and a friendly man's voice spoke to him.

"Good day, Hans, will you walk along with me a bit?"

It was Flaig the shoemaker, with whom he had sometimes spent an evening hour in the past, but none for a long while now. Hans went along and listened to the devout Pietist without real attention. Flaig talked about the examination, wished the boy luck, and gave him courage, but the final purpose of his speech was to point out that an examination like that was, after all, only something outward and accidental. To fail was no disgrace; it could happen to the best; and if it should go that way with him, he should remember that God had his special purposes with every soul and led each one by its own ways.

Hans did not have an altogether clear conscience toward the man. He felt a high regard for him and his sure, impressive manner, and yet he had heard so many jokes about the prayer-meeting brethren and had laughed along at them, often against his better knowledge; besides, he had his cowardice to be ashamed of; for some time now he had been avoiding the shoemaker almost fearfully because of his sharp questions. Since he had become the pride of his teachers and a little arrogant himself, Master Flaig had often looked at him so oddly and tried to humble him. Because of that the boy's soul had gradually slipped away from its well-meaning guide, for Hans was in the full flower of boyish defiance and had fine feelers for any unwelcome touch to his self-esteem. Now

he walked beside the talking man and did not know how anxiously and kindly the other looked down on him.

In Crown Street they met the town pastor. The shoemaker greeted him with measured coolness and was suddenly in a hurry, for the town pastor was one of the new-fashioned kind and had the reputation of not even believing in the resurrection. The pastor took the boy along with him.

"How are things?" he asked. "You must be glad the time has come at last."

"Yes, it's all right with me."

"Well, do your best! You know we're all setting our hopes on you. In Latin I expect a special performance from you."

"But if I fail," Hans said shyly.

"Fail?!" The clergyman stopped short in alarm. "Failing is simply impossible. Simply impossible. What thoughts you have!"

"I only mean it could happen, after all..."

"It can't, Hans, it can't; you can set your mind entirely at rest about that. And now give my regards to your papa, and have courage!"

Hans looked after him; then he looked around for the shoemaker. What was it he had said? Latin didn't matter so much, as long as your heart was in the right place and you feared God. It was easy for him to talk. And now the town pastor on top of it. He could never show his face to him again if he failed.

Downcast, he crept home and into the small, sloping garden. Here stood a rotting garden house that had not been used for a long time; in it, in his day, he had knocked together a hutch of boards and kept rabbits in it for three years. Last fall they had been taken away from him, because of the examination. He had no longer had time for amusements.

He had not been in the garden for a long time either. The empty hutch looked ready to fall down, the little grotto of tufa stones in

the corner of the wall had collapsed, the small wooden waterwheel lay bent and broken beside the water pipe. He thought of the time when he had built and carved all this and had had his joy in it. That too was two years ago now—a whole eternity. He picked up the little wheel, bent it this way and that, broke it completely, and threw it over the fence. Away with the stuff, it was all long since over and done with. At that his school friend August came into his mind. August had helped him build the waterwheel and mend the rabbit hutch. Whole afternoons they had played here, shot with the slingshot, stalked the cats, built tents, and eaten raw yellow carrots for their afternoon snack. But then the grinding had begun, and a year ago August had left school and become a mechanic's apprentice. Since then he had shown up only twice. Of course, he too had no time anymore now.

Cloud shadows ran hastily across the valley; the sun already stood near the rim of the mountains. For a moment the boy had the feeling that he must throw himself down and howl. Instead he fetched the hatchet out of the shed, swung it through the air with his skinny little arms, and hacked the rabbit hutch into a hundred pieces. The slats flew apart, the nails bent with a screech, a bit of rotten rabbit fodder, still from last summer, came to light. He hacked away at it all as though he could kill his longing for the rabbits and for August and for all the old childish things.

"Now, now, now, now, now, what sort of business is this?" his father called from the window. "What are you doing there?"

"Firewood."

He gave no further answer, but threw the hatchet away, ran across the yard into the lane, and then upstream along the bank. Out near the brewery two rafts lay tied up. On rafts like these he had often drifted downriver for hours in the past, on warm summer afternoons, at once excited and lulled to sleep by the ride on the water that slapped between the logs. He jumped across onto

the loose, floating logs, lay down on a heap of willow withes, and tried to imagine that the raft was under way, moving now quickly, now hesitantly, past meadows, fields, villages, and cool edges of woods, under bridges and through raised sluice gates, and he was lying on it and everything was the way it used to be, when he still gathered rabbit fodder on the Kapfberg, fished in the tanners' gardens along the bank, and had no headache and no worries yet.

Tired and sulky, he came home to supper. His father was terribly excited about the coming trip to Stuttgart for the examination and asked a dozen times whether the books were packed, whether he had laid out his black suit, whether he did not want to read in his grammar on the way, whether he felt well. Hans gave short, snappish answers, ate little, and soon said good night.

"Good night, Hans. Sleep well, now! I'll wake you at six tomorrow, then. You haven't forgotten the lexicon, have you?" "No, I haven't forgotten 'the' lexicon. Good night!"

In his little room he sat awake for a long time without a light. Up to now this had been the only blessing the business of the examination had brought him—the little room of his own, in which he was master and was not disturbed. Here, in the struggle with fatigue, sleep, and headache, he had brooded away long evening hours over Caesar, Xenophon, grammars, dictionaries, and mathematical problems, tenacious, defiant, and ambitious, often close to despair too. But here he had also had the few hours that were worth more to him than all the lost pleasures of boyhood, those few dreamlike, strange hours full of pride and intoxication and the courage of victory, in which he had dreamed and longed his way beyond school, examination, and everything into a circle of higher beings. Then a bold, blissful presentiment had seized him that he really was something other and better than his fat-cheeked, good-natured classmates and might perhaps one day look down on them in superiority from a remote height. Now too he breathed more

freely, as though there were a freer and cooler air in this little room, sat down on the bed, and drowsed away a few hours in dreams, wishes, and presentiments. Slowly the light lids fell over his large, overworked eyes, opened once more, blinked, and fell again; the pale boyish head sank onto the thin shoulder, the slender arms stretched out wearily. He had fallen asleep in his clothes, and the soft, motherly hand of slumber smoothed the waves in his restless child's heart and erased the little lines on his pretty forehead.



It was unheard of. The rector himself, despite the early hour, had taken the trouble to come to the station. Mr. Giebenrath was encased in his black frock coat and could not stand still for excitement, joy, and pride; he tripped nervously around the rector and around Hans, let the stationmaster and all the railway men wish him a good journey and good luck for his son's examination, and held his small, stiff suitcase now in his left hand, now in his right. His umbrella he held now under his arm, now clamped between his knees; he dropped it several times and each time set the suitcase down in order to be able to pick it up again. One would have thought he was traveling to America and not to Stuttgart on a round-trip ticket. The son seemed quite calm, but secret fear was choking him in the throat.

The train came in and stopped, they got on, the rector waved his hand, the father lit a cigar, below them in the valley the town and the river disappeared. The journey was torture for both of them.

In Stuttgart the father suddenly came to life and began to be cheerful, affable, and a man of the world; he was animated by the bliss of the small-town man who has come to the royal capital for

a few days. Hans, though, grew quieter and more fearful; a deep oppression took hold of him at the sight of the city; the strange faces, the swaggeringly tall, overdressed houses, the long, tiring walks, the horse-drawn streetcars and the noise of the streets intimidated him and hurt him. They were lodging with an aunt, and there the strange rooms, the friendliness and talkativeness of the aunt, the long, aimless sitting around, and the father's endless encouraging talk crushed the boy completely. Strange and lost, he hunched about the room, and when he looked at the unfamiliar surroundings, the aunt and her city clothes, the large-patterned wallpaper, the mantel clock, the pictures on the wall, or through the window at the noisy street, he felt utterly betrayed, and it seemed to him then that he had been away from home for an eternity already and had for the time being entirely forgotten everything he had learned with so much toil.

In the afternoon he had wanted to go over the Greek particles once more, but the aunt suggested a walk. For a moment something like green meadows and the rushing of woods rose before Hans's inner eye, and he gladly accepted. Soon enough, though, he saw that taking a walk here in the big city was a different kind of pleasure from walking at home.

He went alone with the aunt, since Papa was paying calls in the city. On the very stairs the misery began. On the second floor they met a stout, haughty-looking lady, to whom the aunt dropped a curtsy and who at once began to chat with great eloquence. The halt lasted more than a quarter of an hour. Hans stood beside them, pressed against the banister, was sniffed at and growled at by the lady's little dog, and understood vaguely that they were talking about him too, for the stout stranger looked him up and down repeatedly through her pince-nez. They were barely out on the street when the aunt went into a shop, and it was a good while before she came back. Meanwhile Hans stood shyly in the street,

was pushed aside by passersby and jeered at by street boys. When the aunt came back out of the shop, she handed him a bar of chocolate, and he thanked her politely, although he did not like chocolate. At the next corner they got on the horsecar, and now they rode in the overcrowded car with constant ringing through streets and more streets, until at last they reached a great avenue and park. There a fountain was playing, fenced flowerbeds were blooming, and goldfish swam in a small artificial pond. They strolled up and down, back and forth, and in circles amid a swarm of other strollers, and saw a mass of faces, of elegant and other clothes, bicycles, invalid chairs, and baby carriages, heard a tangle of voices, and breathed a warm, dusty air. At the end they sat down on a bench beside other people. The aunt had talked away almost the whole time; now she sighed, smiled lovingly at the boy, and told him to eat his chocolate now. He did not want to.

“Good Lord, you’re not going to be shy? No, go on and eat it, eat!”

So he took out his little bar, tugged for a while at the silver paper, and finally bit off a tiny piece. Chocolate was something he simply could not stand for the life of him, but he did not dare tell the aunt so. While he was still sucking and choking on the bite, the aunt had discovered an acquaintance in the crowd and dashed off.

“Just stay sitting here, I’ll be right back.”

Hans breathed with relief, used the opportunity, and flung his chocolate far away onto the lawn. Then he swung his legs in time, stared at all the people, and felt unhappy. In the end he began once again to recite the irregular verbs, but to his mortal terror he knew almost none of them anymore. Forgotten, all of it! And tomorrow was the state examination.

The aunt came back and had learned in the meantime that there were a hundred and eighteen candidates for the state examination this year. Only thirty-six could pass, though. At that the

boy's heart sank completely into his boots, and he did not say another word the whole way home. At the house he got a headache, again would not eat anything, and was in such despair that his father gave him a sound scolding and even the aunt found him unbearable. In the night he slept heavily and deeply, pursued by hideous dream scenes. He saw himself sitting in the examination with the hundred and seventeen others; the examiner looked now like the town pastor at home, now like the aunt, and heaped up mountains of chocolate in front of him that he was supposed to eat. And while he ate in tears, he saw the others stand up one after another and disappear through a little door. They had all eaten their mountain, but his grew bigger and bigger before his eyes, swelled over table and bench, and seemed about to smother him.

The next morning, while Hans was drinking his coffee and not letting the clock out of his sight, so as not to be late for the examination on any account, many people in his home town were thinking of him. First of all Flaig the shoemaker; he said his prayer before the morning soup, the family together with the journeymen and both apprentices stood in a circle around the table, and to his usual morning prayer the master today added the words: "O Lord, hold thy hand also over the pupil Hans Giebenrath, who goes into the examination today; bless and strengthen him, and let him one day become a true and valiant preacher of thy divine name!"

The town pastor did not pray for him, it is true, but at breakfast he said to his wife, "Now the little Giebenrath is going into the examination. He'll become something special yet; people will take notice of him, and then it won't do any harm that I stepped in to help him with the Latin lessons."

The form master, before he began the lesson, said to his pupils, "So, now the state examination is starting in Stuttgart, and we want to wish Giebenrath all the best. Not that he needs it, for he can put ten lazybones like you in his pocket." And now almost all

the pupils too thought of the absent one, especially the many who had made bets among themselves on his passing or failing.

And since heartfelt intercession and fervent sympathy easily work at a distance across great stretches, Hans too could feel that they were thinking of him at home. True, he went into the examination hall with a pounding heart, accompanied by his father, followed the instructions of the attendant timidly and fearfully, and looked around the large room full of pale boys like a criminal in the torture chamber. But when the professor had come in, called for silence, and dictated the text for the Latin composition, Hans found it, with a breath of relief, ridiculously easy. Quickly and almost cheerfully he made his rough draft, then wrote it out in a careful fair copy, and was one of the first to hand in his work. Afterward, to be sure, he missed the way to the aunt's house and wandered about for two hours in the hot city streets, but that did not much disturb the balance he had found again; he was even glad to escape from the aunt and his father for a while longer, and as he wandered through the strange, noisy streets of the capital he felt like a daring adventurer. When at last he had asked his way with difficulty and found his way home, he was stormed with questions.

"How did it go? What was it like? Did you know your stuff?"

"It was easy," he said proudly. "I could have translated that in the fifth form."

And he ate with honest hunger.

He had the afternoon free. Papa dragged him around to a few relatives and friends. At one of them they found a shy boy dressed in black who had come from Göppingen, also to take the state examination. The boys were left to themselves and looked at each other shyly and curiously.

"What did you think of the Latin paper? Easy, wasn't it?" Hans asked.

“Awfully easy. But that’s just the thing, in easy papers you make the most blunders. You don’t pay attention. And there’ll have been hidden traps in it too, all right.”

“You think so?”

“Of course. Those gentlemen aren’t so stupid.”

Hans was a little startled and grew thoughtful. Then he asked timidly, “Do you still have the text?”

The other brought his notebook, and now they went through the whole paper together, word for word. The boy from Göppingen seemed to be a sophisticated Latinist; at least he twice used grammatical terms that Hans had never heard at all.

“And what do you think comes tomorrow?”

“Greek and composition.”

Then the boy from Göppingen asked how many candidates had come from Hans’s school.

“None,” said Hans, “only me.”

“Whew, there are twelve of us from Göppingen! Three really clever ones among them; they’re expected to come out among the first. Last year the top boy was from Göppingen too.—Will you go to the gymnasium if you fail?”

There had never been any talk of that at all.

“I don’t know... No, I don’t think so.”

“No? I’m going on with my studies in any case, even if I fail now. Then my mother will let me go to Ulm.”

That impressed Hans enormously. The twelve from Göppingen with the three really clever ones frightened him too. He could never show his face again.

At home he sat down and went over the verbs in *-mi* once more. He had not been at all afraid of the Latin; there he felt sure of himself. But with Greek it was a peculiar thing. He liked it, he was almost enthusiastic about it, but only for reading. Xenophon especially was written so beautifully and nimbly and freshly;

everything sounded cheerful, lovely, and vigorous and had a brisk, free spirit, and it was all easy to understand, besides. But as soon as it came to grammar, or to translating from German into Greek, he felt himself lost in a labyrinth of conflicting rules and forms and felt almost the same fearful awe of the foreign language as he had in the first lesson long ago, when he could not even read the Greek alphabet yet.

The next day, sure enough, Greek came up, and after it German composition. The Greek paper was rather long and not at all easy; the subject of the composition was tricky and could be misunderstood. From ten o'clock on it grew sultry and hot in the hall. Hans did not have a good pen and spoiled two sheets of paper before the Greek paper was written out in fair copy. During the composition he got into the direst straits because of a brazen neighbor who pushed a sheet of paper with a question on it across to him and nudged him in the ribs to make him answer. All communication with one's neighbors on the bench was most strictly forbidden and was inexorably followed by exclusion from the examination. Trembling with fear, he wrote on the slip, "Leave me alone," and turned his back on the questioner. It was so hot, too. Even the supervising professor, who paced the hall steadily and evenly and did not rest for a moment, passed his handkerchief over his face several times. Hans sweated in his thick confirmation suit, got a headache, and in the end handed in his sheets quite miserably, with the feeling that they were full of mistakes and that the examination was probably finished for him now.

At the table he did not say a word, but only shrugged at every question and made a face like a condemned man. The aunt comforted him, but his father grew agitated and unpleasant. After the meal he took the boy into the next room and tried once more to question him.

"It went badly," said Hans.

“Why didn’t you pay attention? A person can pull himself together, after all, damn it.”

Hans said nothing, and when his father began to scold, he turned red and said, “You don’t understand anything about Greek anyway!”

The worst of it was that at two o’clock he had to go to the oral examination. He dreaded that most of all. On the way, in the burning-hot city street, he felt utterly wretched, and for misery and fear and dizziness he could hardly see out of his eyes.

For ten minutes he sat before three gentlemen at a big green table, translated a few Latin sentences, and answered the questions put to him. Then for ten minutes he sat before three other gentlemen, translated Greek, and again was asked all sorts of things. At the end they wanted an irregularly formed aorist from him, but he gave no answer.

“You may go. There, the door on the right.”

He went, but in the doorway the aorist came to him after all. He stopped.

“Go on,” they called to him, “go on! Or are you perhaps unwell?”

“No, but the aorist just came to me.”

He called it into the room, saw one of the gentlemen laugh, and rushed away with his head burning. Then he tried to remember the questions and his answers, but everything got mixed up. He saw only, again and again, the big green surface of the table, the three old, serious gentlemen in frock coats, the open book, and his hand laid on it, trembling. Good God, what answers might he have given!

As he walked through the streets it seemed to him that he had been here for weeks already and could never get away again. Like something very far away, something seen once long ago, the picture of his father’s garden appeared to him, the mountains blue with firs, the fishing spots on the river. Oh, if only he could go

home today! There was no point in staying any longer, after all; the examination was botched in any case.

He bought himself a milk roll and loafed about the streets the whole livelong afternoon, just so as not to have to answer to his father. When he finally came home, they had been worried about him, and since he looked exhausted and miserable, they gave him an egg soup and sent him to bed. Tomorrow came arithmetic and religion, and then he could leave again.

It went quite well the following morning. Hans felt it as bitter irony that everything went right for him today, after he had had such bad luck yesterday in the main subjects. No matter, just away now, home!

“The examination is over, now we can go home,” he announced at the aunt’s.

His father wanted to stay on today. They were going to drive to Cannstatt and drink coffee in the spa gardens there. But Hans begged so imploringly that his father allowed him to leave alone that very day. He was put on the train, received his ticket, got a kiss from the aunt and something to eat for the journey, and now rode home, exhausted and empty of thought, through the green hill country. Only when the blue-black fir-covered mountains came into view did a feeling of joy and deliverance come over the boy. He looked forward to the old maid, to his little room, to the rector, to the familiar low schoolroom, and to everything.

Luckily there were no curious acquaintances at the station, and he could hurry home with his little parcel unnoticed.

“Was it nice in Stuttgart?” asked old Anna.

“Nice? Do you think an examination is something nice? I’m just glad I’m back. Father isn’t coming till tomorrow.”

He drank a bowl of fresh milk, fetched in his bathing trunks that were hanging outside the window, and ran off, but not to the meadow where all the others did their swimming.

He went far out beyond the town to the Scales, where the water flows deep and slow between high bushes. There he undressed, put his hand and then his foot gropingly into the cool water, shivered a little, and then threw himself into the river with a quick plunge. Swimming slowly against the gentle current, he felt the sweat and fear of these last days slide from him, and while the river embraced his slight body and cooled it, his soul took possession of the lovely homeland with new delight. He swam faster, rested, swam again, and felt himself enfolded in a pleasant coolness and tiredness. Lying on his back, he let himself drift downstream again, listened to the fine humming of the evening flies swarming in golden circles, and saw the late sky cut through by small, swift swallows and lit rosy by the sun, already gone, from behind the mountains. When he was back in his clothes and strolling dreamily home, the valley was already full of shadow.

He passed the garden of Sackmann the dealer, where, as a very small boy, he had once stolen unripe plums with a few others. And Kirchner's timber yard, where the white fir beams lay about, under which he used always to find earthworms for fishing. He also passed the little house of Inspector Gefßler, whose daughter Emma he would so much have liked to court on the ice two years ago. She had been the daintiest and most elegant schoolgirl in town, the same age as he, and at that time there had been a while when he wished for nothing so ardently as to speak to her once or give her his hand. It had never come to that; he had been too shy. Since then she had been sent away to a boarding school, and he hardly knew anymore what she looked like. But these boyhood stories came back to him now, as though from the farthest distance, and they had such strong colors and so strangely foreboding a fragrance as nothing of all he had lived through since. Those had been the days, when you sat in the gateway with Naschold's Liese in the evening, peeling potatoes and listening to stories, when on

Sundays, at the crack of dawn, with your trousers rolled up and a bad conscience, you had gone crayfishing or catching goldfins at the lower weir, only to get a thrashing from your father afterward in your soaked Sunday clothes! There had been so many puzzling and strange things and people then, whom he had not thought of at all for a long time now! The little shoemaker with the crooked neck, Strohmeyer, who everyone knew for certain had poisoned his wife, and the adventurous “Mr. Beck,” who roamed the whole district with a stick and a knapsack and whom people called Mister because he had once been a rich man and had owned four horses and a carriage. Hans knew nothing more of them than their names and felt dimly that this obscure little world of the lanes had been lost to him, without anything living and worth experiencing having come in its place.

Since he still had leave for the following day, he slept late into the morning and enjoyed his freedom. At noon he went to meet his father, who was still blissfully full of all the pleasures of Stuttgart.

“If you’ve passed, you may wish for something,” he said in a good humor. “Think it over!”

“No, no,” the boy sighed. “I’ve failed for sure.”

“Nonsense, what are you talking about! Better wish for something before I change my mind.”

“I’d like to go fishing again in the holidays. May I?”

“All right, you may, if you’ve passed the examination.”

The next day, a Sunday, a thunderstorm broke with a down-pour, and Hans sat in his room for hours, reading and thinking. He went over his performance in Stuttgart once more in detail and came again and again to the conclusion that he had had terrible luck and could have done much better papers. It would never be enough to pass now. The stupid headache! Gradually a growing anxiety weighed on him, and finally a heavy worry drove him over to his father.

"Father?"

"What do you want?"

"To ask something. About the wishing. I'd rather give up the fishing."

"So, why that all of a sudden?"

"Because I... Oh, I wanted to ask whether I couldn't..."

"Out with it, what a comedy! Well, what?"

"Whether I can go to the gymnasium if I fail."

Mr. Giebenrath was speechless.

"What? Gymnasium?" he then burst out. "You, to the gymnasium? Who put that into your head?"

"Nobody. I was just wondering."

Mortal fear could be read in his face. His father did not see it.

"Go on, go on," he said, laughing with annoyance. "That's extravagant nonsense. To the gymnasium! I suppose you think I'm a commercial councillor."

He waved it away so violently that Hans gave up and went out in despair.

"What a boy!" he grumbled after him. "Well, I never! Now he even wants to go to the gymnasium! Cheers to that, you've got another think coming."

Hans sat on the windowsill for half an hour, stared at the freshly scrubbed floorboards, and tried to imagine what it would be like if nothing really came of the seminary and the gymnasium and studying. They would put him to work as an apprentice in a cheese shop or in an office, and all his life he would be one of the ordinary, miserable people he despised and absolutely wanted to rise above. His pretty, clever schoolboy face twisted into a grimace full of anger and pain; furiously he jumped up, spat, seized the Latin reader lying there, and threw the book with all his might against the nearest wall. Then he ran out into the rain.

On Monday morning he went back to school.

"How are you?" asked the rector, and gave him his hand. "I thought you would come to see me yesterday. How was it at the examination, then?"

Hans lowered his head.

"Well, what is it? Did it go badly for you?"

"I think so, yes."

"Well, patience!" the old gentleman comforted him. "The report from Stuttgart will probably come this very morning."

The morning was horribly long. No report came, and at the noon meal Hans could hardly swallow for the sobbing inside him.

In the afternoon, when he came into the schoolroom at two o'clock, the form master was already there.

"Hans Giebenrath," he called out loudly.

Hans stepped forward. The teacher gave him his hand.

"I congratulate you, Giebenrath. You have passed the state examination in second place."

A solemn silence fell. The door opened and the rector came in.

"I congratulate you. Well, what do you say now?"

The boy was completely paralyzed with surprise and joy.

"Well, don't you have anything to say?"

"If I'd known that," burst out of him, "I could have gone all the way and come out first."

"Now go home," said the rector, "and tell your papa. You don't need to come to school anymore now; the holidays begin in a week anyway."

Dizzy, the boy came out onto the street, saw the lindens standing and the market square lying in the sun, everything as usual, but everything more beautiful and more meaningful and more joyful. He had passed! And he was second! When the first storm of joy was over, a warm feeling of gratitude filled him. Now he did not need to avoid the town pastor. Now he could study! Now he no

longer needed to fear either the cheese shop or the countinghouse!

And now he could go fishing again, too. His father was just standing in the front door when he came home.

“What’s new?” he asked lightly.

“Not much. They’ve dismissed me from school.”

“What? Why?”

“Because I’m a seminarian now.”

“Well, I’ll be darned, have you passed, then?”

Hans nodded.

“Did you do well?”

“I came out second.”

The old man had not expected that, after all. He did not know what to say at all, kept clapping his son on the shoulder, laughed, and shook his head. Then he opened his mouth to say something. But he said nothing, and only shook his head again.

“Thunderation!” he cried at last. And once more: “Thunderation!”

Hans rushed into the house, up the stairs and into the attic, tore open a wall cupboard in the empty garret, rummaged around in it, and pulled out all sorts of boxes and bundles of line and pieces of cork. It was his fishing tackle. Now above all he had to cut himself a good rod to go with it. He went down to his father.

“Papa, lend me your pocketknife!”

“What for?”

“I have to cut a switch, for fishing.”

Papa reached into his pocket.

“Here,” he said, beaming and grand, “here are two marks, you can buy yourself a knife of your own. But don’t go to Hanfried, go across the way to the cutler’s.”

Now it went at a gallop. The cutler asked about the examination, got to hear the good news, and handed over an extra-fine

knife. Downstream, below the Brühel bridge, stood fine, slender alder and hazel bushes; there, after long choosing, he cut himself a flawless, toughly springing rod and hurried back home with it.

With a flushed face and shining eyes he set to the happy work of rigging his tackle, which was almost as dear to him as the fishing itself. The whole afternoon and evening he sat over it. The white, brown, and green lines were sorted, painstakingly examined, mended, and freed of many an old knot and tangle. Pieces of cork and quills of all shapes and sizes were tried out or newly carved; little pieces of lead of various weights were hammered into balls and notched, for weighting the lines. Then came the hooks, of which there was still a small supply. They were fastened partly to fourfold black sewing thread, partly to a remnant of gut string, partly to twisted lines of horsehair. Toward evening everything was ready, and Hans was sure now that he would not have to be bored in the long seven weeks of the holidays, for with his rod he could spend whole days alone by the water.

Chapter Two

That is how summer holidays ought to be! Above the mountains a sky as blue as gentian, for weeks one blazing hot day after another, only now and then a violent, short thunderstorm. The river, although it makes its way through so much sandstone rock and fir shade and so many narrow valleys, was so warm that one could swim until late in the evening. All around the little town there was the smell of hay and of the second mowing; the narrow strips of the few grain fields turned yellow and golden brown; along the brooks grew, rank and man-high, the white-flowering plants that look like hemlock, whose blossoms are shaped like umbrellas and always covered with tiny beetles, and out of whose hollow stalks one can cut flutes and whistles. Along the edges of the woods long rows of woolly, yellow-flowering, majestic mulleins made a show; loosestrife and willowherb swayed on their slender, tough stems and covered whole slopes with their violet red. Inside, under the firs, stood the tall, steep red foxglove, grave and beautiful and strange, with its broad, silver-woolly root leaves, its strong stalk, and its beautiful red bell flowers ranged high up the stem. Beside it the many kinds of mushrooms: the red, gleaming fly agaric, the fat, broad cep, the fantastic goatsbeard, the red, many-branched coral fungus, and the strangely colorless, sickly plump pinesap. On the many heathy strips between wood and meadow the tough broom flamed a burning yellow, then came long lilac-red bands of heather, then the meadows themselves, most of them already standing ready for the second cutting, overgrown with the colors of cuckooflower, campion, sage, and scabious. In the deciduous

woods the chaffinches sang without stopping, in the fir woods fox-red squirrels ran through the treetops, along the field edges, walls, and dry ditches green lizards breathed and shimmered with pleasure in the warmth, and over the meadows the high, shrilling, never-tiring songs of the cicadas rang endlessly.

At this time of year the town made a very rustic impression; hay wagons, the smell of hay, and the hammering of scythes filled the streets and the air; if it had not been for the two factories, one would have thought oneself in a village.

Early in the morning of the first day of the holidays Hans was already standing impatiently in the kitchen waiting for his coffee, when old Anna had hardly gotten up. He helped make the fire, fetched bread from the baker's, quickly gulped down his coffee, cooled with fresh milk, put bread in his pocket, and ran off. At the upper railway embankment he stopped, took a round tin box out of his trouser pocket, and began busily catching grasshoppers. The train went by—not in a rush, for the line climbs steeply there, but nice and comfortably, with all its windows open and few passengers, letting a long, cheerful banner of smoke and steam flutter behind it. He looked after it and watched the whitish smoke swirl and soon lose itself in the sunny, clear early air. How long it was since he had seen all this! He took deep breaths, as though he wanted to make up twice over now for the lovely time he had lost and be a little boy once more, really free and easy and without a care.

His heart was pounding with secret delight and the lust of the hunt as he walked with the box of grasshoppers and the new rod across the bridge and around behind the gardens to the Horse Pool, the deepest spot in the river. There was a place there where, leaning against a willow trunk, one could fish more comfortably and undisturbed than anywhere else. He unwound the line, fixed a small lead shot to it, mercilessly spitted a fat grasshopper on the

hook, and cast the line with a wide swing toward the middle of the river. The old, familiar game began: the little bleak swarmed around the bait in whole shoals and tried to tug it off the hook. Soon it had been eaten away; a second grasshopper had its turn, and another, and a fourth and fifth. He fastened them to the hook more and more carefully; finally he weighted the line with another shot, and now the first proper fish tried the bait. It tugged at it a little, let it go again, tried it once more. Now it bit—a good angler feels that twitch in his fingers through line and rod! Hans gave an artful jerk and began to pull very carefully. The fish was hooked, and when it came into view, Hans recognized a roach. You know them at once by the broad, whitish-yellow shimmering body, the triangular head, and especially the lovely flesh-red base of the belly fins. How heavy might it be? But before he could guess, the fish gave a desperate lash, whirled about in terror on the surface of the water, and got away. He could still see it turning over three or four times in the water and then vanishing into the depths like a silver flash. It had not bitten well.

The excitement and passionate attention of the hunt had now awakened in the angler. His gaze clung sharply and steadily to the thin brown line where it touched the water; his cheeks were flushed, his movements spare, quick, and sure. A second roach bit and came out, then a small carp, which it was almost a pity to take, then three gudgeon one after the other. The gudgeon pleased him especially, since his father liked to eat them. They grow at most as long as a hand, and have a fat, small-scaled body, a thick head with a droll white beard, small eyes, and a slender tail end. Their color is between green and brown and, when the fish is brought to land, shades into steel blue.

Meanwhile the sun had climbed high; the foam at the upper weir shone snow-white; the warm air trembled over the water; and when you looked up you saw a few dazzling little clouds the

size of a hand standing over the Muckberg. It was getting hot. Nothing expresses the warmth of a pure midsummer day so well as the few calm little clouds that stand still and white halfway up the blue and are so filled and soaked with light that you cannot look at them for long. Without them you would often not notice how hot it is, not from the blue sky nor from the glitter of the river's surface, but as soon as you see the few foam-white, tightly packed noon sailers, you suddenly feel the sun burning, look for shade, and pass your hand over your damp forehead.

Gradually Hans paid less strict attention to his line. He was a little tired, and toward noon one usually catches almost nothing anyway. The whitefish, even the oldest and biggest, come up at this time to sun themselves. They swim dreamily upstream in great dark schools, close to the surface, take fright now and then suddenly for no visible reason, and in these hours will not go for any hook.

He let the line hang over a branch of the willow into the water, sat down on the ground, and looked at the green river. Slowly the fish came up; one dark back after another appeared on the surface—quiet, slowly swimming schools, lured up and spellbound by the warmth. They must feel fine in the warm water! Hans took off his boots and let his feet hang in the water, which was quite lukewarm at the surface. He looked at the fish he had caught, which swam motionless in a big watering can and only now and then splashed softly. How beautiful they were! White, brown, green, silver, dull gold, blue, and other colors gleamed on their scales and fins at every movement.

It was very still. You could hardly hear the noise of the wagons crossing the bridge; even the clatter of the mill was only faintly audible here. Only the steady, mild roar of the white weir came down calm, cool, and drowsy, and at the raft posts the soft, swirling sound of the moving water.

Greek and Latin, grammar and style, arithmetic and memorizing and the whole tormenting turmoil of a long, restless, harried year sank quietly away in the drowsy, warm hour. Hans had a slight headache, but not nearly as bad as usual, and now he could sit by the water again, after all; he watched the foam scatter at the weir, blinked at his line, and beside him the fish he had caught swam in the can. It was so delicious. In between it suddenly occurred to him that he had passed the state examination and come out second; at that he splashed his bare feet in the water, stuck both hands in his trouser pockets, and began to whistle a tune. He could not really and properly whistle, it was true; that was an old grief and had already earned him mockery enough from his schoolmates. He could only do it through his teeth, and only softly, but that was enough for household use, and now no one could hear him anyway. The others were sitting in school now having geography; only he was free and dismissed. He had overtaken them; they stood beneath him now. They had tormented him enough, because apart from August he had had no friendships and had never taken any real pleasure in their scuffles and games. Well, now they could watch him go, the dolts, the blockheads. He despised them so much that for a moment he stopped whistling to twist his mouth. Then he wound up his line and had to laugh, for there was not a shred of bait left on the hook. The grasshoppers left over in the box were set free and crawled, dazed and listless, into the short grass. Next door at the tannery they were already stopping for the noon meal; it was time to go and eat.

At the table hardly a word was spoken.

"Catch anything?" asked Papa.

"Five."

"Is that so? Well, just watch out you don't catch the old one, or there won't be any young ones afterward."

The conversation got no further. It was so warm. And it was such a pity that you were not allowed to go swimming right after eating. Why, actually? It was supposed to be harmful! Harmful, my foot; Hans knew better, he had gone often enough in spite of the rule. But not anymore now; he was too grown-up for naughtiness, after all. Good heavens, at the examination they had called him Sie, the way one speaks to a grown man!

Besides, it was not at all bad to lie under the spruce in the garden for an hour. There was shade enough, and you could read or watch the butterflies. So he lay there until two o'clock, and he very nearly fell asleep. But now for a swim! There were only a few little boys on the bathing meadow; the bigger ones were all sitting in school, and Hans did not grudge it to them one bit. Nice and slowly he took off his clothes and got into the water. He knew how to enjoy warmth and coolness by turns: now he swam a stretch and dived and splashed, now he lay on his stomach on the bank and felt the sun burning on his quickly drying skin. The little boys crept around him respectfully. Yes indeed, he had become a celebrity. And he looked so different from the rest, too. On the thin, tanned neck sat, free and elegant, the fine head with its intelligent face and superior eyes. For the rest he was very thin, slender-limbed, and delicate; you could count his ribs on his chest and back, and he had almost no calves at all.

Almost the whole afternoon he drifted back and forth between sun and water. After four o'clock most of his class came running up in a hurry and with a lot of noise.

"Hey, Giebenrath! You've got it good now."

He stretched comfortably. "It's not bad, no."

"When do you have to go to the seminary?"

"Not till September. It's vacation now."

He let himself be envied. It did not even touch him when mockery rose in the background and one of them sang the verse:

If I could only be
Like the mayor's Lisabeth!
She lies abed all day,
No such luck for me.

He only laughed. Meanwhile the boys were undressing. One jumped straight into the water, others first cooled themselves off carefully, some lay down in the grass for a while beforehand. A good diver was admired. A scaredy-cat was pushed into the water from behind and screamed bloody murder. They chased each other, ran and swam, splashed the dry bathers on the bank. The splashing and shouting were loud, and the whole width of the river gleamed with bright, wet, shining bodies.

After an hour Hans went away. The warm evening hours were coming, when the fish bite again. Until supper he fished on the bridge and caught next to nothing. The fish went greedily after the hook; every moment the bait was eaten off, but nothing stayed on. He had cherries on the hook; evidently they were too big and too soft. He decided to try again later.

At supper he learned that a lot of acquaintances had been by to congratulate him. And they showed him today's weekly paper; under "Official Notices" there was an item: "To the entrance examination for the lower theological seminary our town this time sent only one candidate, Hans Giebenrath. To our joy we have just learned that he passed the examination in second place."

He folded up the paper, put it in his pocket, and said nothing, but he was full to bursting with pride and jubilation. Afterward he went fishing again. For bait this time he took along a few little pieces of cheese; fish like the taste of it, and they can see it well in the dusk.

He left the rod standing and took along only a quite simple hand line. That was the fishing he liked best: to hold the line in his

hand without rod and without float, so that the whole tackle consisted of nothing but line and hook. It was a little more laborious, but much more fun. You controlled the smallest movement of the bait, felt every nibble and every bite, and could watch the fish in the twitching of the line as though you saw them before you. Of course, this kind of fishing has to be understood; you must have skillful fingers and keep watch like a spy.

In the narrow, deeply cut, winding river valley dusk came early. The water lay black and still under the bridge; in the lower mill there was already a light. Talk and singing ran over bridges and lanes; the air was a little sultry, and in the river every moment a dark fish leaped up with a short slap. On such evenings the fish are strangely excited, dart back and forth in zigzags, fling themselves into the air, bump against the line, and hurl themselves blindly at the bait. When the last little piece of cheese was used up, Hans had pulled out four smallish carp; he meant to take them to the town pastor tomorrow.

A warm wind ran down the valley. It was getting quite dark, but the sky was still light. Out of the whole darkening little town only the church tower and the castle roof rose black and sharp into the bright heights. Somewhere far off there must be a thunderstorm; now and then a soft, far-distant thundering could be heard.

When Hans climbed into bed at ten o'clock, he was more pleasantly tired and sleepy in head and limbs than he had been for a long time. A long row of beautiful, free summer days lay before him, soothing and inviting, days for idling away, swimming away, fishing away, dreaming away. Only one thing nagged at him, that he had not come out first outright.



Early in the morning Hans was standing in the front hall of the town pastor's house delivering his fish. The town pastor came out of his study.

"Ah, Hans Giebenrath! Good morning! I congratulate you, I congratulate you with all my heart.—And what have you got there?"

"Just a few fish. I went fishing yesterday."

"Well, look at that! Thank you very much. But now come in."

Hans stepped into the study he knew so well. It did not really look like a pastor's study here. It smelled neither of potted plants nor of tobacco. The considerable collection of books showed almost nothing but new, neatly varnished and gilded spines, not the battered, crooked, wormeaten, and foxed volumes one otherwise finds in parsonage libraries. Whoever looked more closely could tell from the titles of the well-ordered books, too, that a new spirit lived here, a different one from the spirit that lived in the old-fashioned, venerable gentlemen of the dying generation. The respectable showpieces of a parsonage library, the Swabian Pietist divines Bengel, Öttinger, and Steinhofer, along with the devout hymn singers whom Mörike celebrates so beautifully and warmly in "The Weathercock," were missing here, or at least disappeared in the mass of modern works. All in all, with the files of periodicals, the standing desk, and the big writing table strewn with papers, it looked learned and serious. One got the impression that much work was done here. And much work was done here, too, though less on sermons, catechism lessons, and Bible classes than on studies and articles for learned journals and on preliminary studies for books of his own. Dreamy mysticism and brooding full of presentiment were banished from this place; banished too was the naive theology of the heart, which bends down over the chasms of science toward the thirsting soul of the people in love and compassion. Instead, biblical criticism was zealously pursued here, and a search was on for the "historical Christ," who flows from the

modern theologians' mouths like water, it is true, but also slips through their fingers like an eel.

It is no different in theology than anywhere else. There is a theology that is art, and another that is science, or at least strives to be. That was so in olden times as it is today, and the scientific ones have always neglected the old wine for the new wineskins, while the artists, carelessly persisting in many an outward error, have been comforters and bringers of joy for many. It is the old, unequal struggle between criticism and creation, science and art, in which the former is always right, without anyone being served by it, while the latter again and again casts out the seed of faith, of love, of comfort, and of beauty and the sense of eternity, and again and again finds good soil. For life is stronger than death, and faith is mightier than doubt.

For the first time Hans sat on the little leather sofa between the standing desk and the window. The town pastor was exceedingly friendly. Quite like a comrade he told him about the seminary and how one lived and studied there.

"The most important new thing," he said at the end, "that you will meet with there is the introduction to New Testament Greek. A new world will open up to you with it, rich in work and joy. At first the language will give you trouble; it is no longer Attic Greek, but a new idiom created by a new spirit."

Hans listened attentively and felt with pride that he had come closer to true scholarship.

"Being introduced to this new world in the classroom," the town pastor went on, "naturally takes away some of its magic. And at the seminary Hebrew may at first take up your time too one-sidedly. Now, if you would like, we could make a small beginning in these holidays. At the seminary you will then be glad to have time and strength left over for other things. We could read a few chapters of Luke together, and you would learn the language almost in play,

on the side. I can lend you a dictionary. You would put in about an hour a day on it, two at the most. No more than that, of course, for above all you must have your well-earned rest now. Naturally this is only a suggestion—I wouldn't want to spoil your lovely holiday feeling with it, after all."

Hans accepted, of course. To be sure, this Luke hour seemed to him like a light cloud in the happy blue sky of his freedom, but he was ashamed to refuse. And learning a new language like this on the side in the holidays was surely more pleasure than work. He had a faint fear in any case of all the new things that would have to be learned at the seminary, especially of the Hebrew.

Not dissatisfied, he left the town pastor and made his way up the Larch Path into the woods. The little ill humor had already blown away, and the more he thought the matter over, the more acceptable it seemed to him. For he knew well enough that at the seminary he would have to work even more ambitiously and doggedly if he wanted to leave his classmates behind there too. And he decidedly wanted to. Why, actually? He did not know himself. For three years people had had their eye on him; the teachers, the town pastor, his father, and above all the rector had spurred him on and kept him goaded and breathless. The whole long time, from class to class, he had been the undisputed top boy. And now he himself had gradually come to take his pride in being at the top and tolerating no one beside him. And the stupid fear of the examination was over now.

Of course, having holidays was really the best thing after all. How unaccustomedly beautiful the woods were again now in these morning hours, when there was no other walker in them but him! Column after column the spruces stood, vaulting an endless hall in blue-green. There was little undergrowth, only here and there a thick tangle of raspberry canes, but instead a soft, furry floor of moss stretching for hours, grown with low bilberry bushes and

heather. The dew had already dried, and between the bolt-straight trunks hung the peculiar sultriness of the morning woods, which, mixed of sun warmth, dew haze, the scent of moss, and the smell of resin, fir needles, and mushrooms, nestles coaxingly against all the senses with a faint numbness. Hans threw himself down in the moss, grazed the dark, thickly grown bilberry bushes bare, heard here and there the woodpecker hammering on a trunk and the jealous cuckoo calling. Between the blackish dark crowns of the firs the sky looked in, spotless and deep blue; in the distance the thousands and thousands of upright trunks crowded together into a grave brown wall; here and there a yellow patch of sun lay strewn on the moss, warm and richly glowing.

Hans had really meant to take a long walk, at least as far as the Lützel farm or the Crocus Meadow. Now he lay in the moss, ate bilberries, and stared lazily into the air. He himself began to wonder that he was so tired. Before, a walk of three or four hours had been nothing at all to him. He resolved to pull himself together and march a good stretch. And he walked a few hundred paces. Then, he did not know how it happened, he was lying in the moss again, resting. He stayed lying there; his gaze wandered, blinking, through trunks and treetops and along the green ground. To think this air could make one so tired!

When he came home toward noon, he had a headache again. His eyes hurt too; on the forest path the sun had dazzled so terribly. Half the afternoon he sat around the house in a sulk; only when he went swimming did he feel fresh again. It was time now to go to the town pastor.

On the way Flaig the shoemaker, who was sitting on his three-legged stool at the window of his workshop, saw him and called him in.

“Where are you off to, my son? We never see you at all anymore.”

"I have to go to the town pastor now."

"Still? The examination's over, isn't it?"

"Yes, now something else is coming. The New Testament. You see, the New Testament is written in Greek, but in a quite different Greek again from what I've learned. I'm supposed to learn that now."

The shoemaker pushed his cap far back on his neck and drew his big brooding forehead together into thick furrows. He sighed heavily.

"Hans," he said softly, "I want to tell you something. Until now I've kept quiet, on account of the examination, but now I have to warn you. You must know, you see, that the town pastor is an unbeliever. He'll tell you and make you believe that the holy scriptures are false and full of lies, and when you've read the New Testament with him, you'll have lost your faith yourself and not know how."

"But, Master Flaig, it's only about the Greek. I have to learn it at the seminary anyway."

"So you say. But it's one thing whether you learn to study the Bible with devout and conscientious teachers or with one who no longer believes in the dear Lord."

"Yes, but you don't know whether he really doesn't believe in him."

"Yes, Hans, we do know it, unfortunately."

"But what am I supposed to do? I've already arranged with him that I'll come."

"Then you must come, that goes without saying. But better not too often. And if he says such things about the Bible, that it's the work of men and full of lies and not inspired by the Holy Ghost, then you come to me and we'll talk about it. Will you?"

"Yes, Master Flaig. But it surely won't be as bad as that."

"You'll see; mark my words!"

The town pastor was not home yet, and Hans had to wait for him in the study. While he looked at the gold titles on the books, the shoemaker's words gave him something to think about. He had often heard such remarks about the town pastor and the new-fashioned clergymen in general. But now for the first time he felt himself drawn into these matters, with suspense and curiosity. They were not as important and terrible to him as to the shoemaker; rather, he scented here the chance to get behind old, great secrets. In his earlier school years the questions of God's omnipresence, of where souls go, of the devil and hell, had now and then stirred him to fantastic broodings, but all that had fallen asleep in the last strict, industrious years, and his schoolroom Christian faith had only occasionally awakened to some personal life in his talks with the shoemaker. He had to smile when he compared him with the town pastor. The boy could not understand the shoemaker's harsh firmness, won in bitter years, and besides, Flaig was a clever man, but a simple and one-sided one, mocked by many for his Pietist ways. In the meetings of the prayer-meeting brethren he appeared as a stern brotherly judge and a mighty expounder of Holy Scripture, and he also held his devotional hours out in the villages round about; but otherwise he was just a little craftsman and as narrow as all the others. The town pastor, on the other hand, was not only a skillful, eloquent man and preacher, but also an industrious and rigorous scholar. Hans looked up at the bookshelves with awe.

The town pastor came soon, exchanged his frock coat for a light black house jacket, put a Greek edition of the Gospel of Luke into his pupil's hands, and told him to read. That was quite different from the way the Latin lessons had been. They read only a few sentences, which were translated with painstaking literalness, and then the teacher, out of inconspicuous examples, skillfully and eloquently drew out the peculiar spirit of this language, talked about

the time and the way in which the book came into being, and in that single hour gave the boy a quite new idea of learning and reading. Hans got an inkling of what riddles and problems lay hidden in every verse and word, how since ancient times thousands of scholars, ponderers, and researchers had labored over these questions, and it seemed to him that he himself was being received in this hour into the circle of the seekers after truth.

He was lent a lexicon and a grammar and went on working at home the whole evening. Now he felt over how many mountains of work and knowledge the road to true scholarship led, and he was ready to fight his way through and leave nothing lying by the way. The shoemaker was forgotten for the time being.

For several days this new pursuit took him over entirely. Every evening he went to the town pastor, and every day true learning seemed to him more beautiful, more difficult, and more worth striving for. In the early mornings he went fishing, in the afternoons to the bathing meadow; otherwise he hardly left the house. His ambition, which had gone under in the fear and triumph of the examination, was awake again and gave him no rest. At the same time the peculiar feeling in his head began to stir again that he had felt so often in the last months—not a pain, but a hasty, triumphant driving of quickened pulses and violently excited powers, a hurried, impetuous craving to press forward. Afterward, to be sure, came the headache, but as long as that fine fever lasted, his reading and work stormed ahead; then he read the hardest sentences in Xenophon, which otherwise cost him a quarter of an hour, as if in play; then he almost never needed the dictionary, but flew quickly and joyfully over whole difficult pages with a sharpened understanding. And with this heightened fever for work and thirst for knowledge went a proud sense of himself, as though school and teachers and the years of learning already lay far behind him

and he were already striding along a path of his own, toward the heights of knowledge and ability.

This came over him again now, and with it the light, often interrupted sleep with strangely clear dreams. When he woke at night with a slight headache and could not fall asleep again, an impatience to get ahead came over him, and a superior pride when he thought of how far ahead of all his classmates he was, and how the teachers and the rector had looked at him with a kind of respect and even admiration.

For the rector it had been a heartfelt pleasure to guide this fine ambition, which he had awakened, and to watch it grow. Let no one say that schoolmasters have no heart and are ossified and soulless pedants! Oh no, when a teacher sees how a child's talent, long coaxed in vain, breaks forth, how a boy lays aside wooden sword and slingshot and bow and the other childish toys, how he begins to strive forward, how the seriousness of work makes out of a rough, chubby-cheeked youngster a fine, serious, and almost ascetic boy, how his face grows older and more spiritual, his gaze deeper and more purposeful, his hand calmer, whiter, and stiller, then his soul laughs with joy and pride. It is his duty and the calling entrusted to him by the state to tame and root out in the young boy the raw forces and desires of nature and to plant in their place quiet, moderate ideals recognized by the state. How many a man who is now a contented citizen and an aspiring official would, without these efforts of the school, have become an unrestrained, storming innovator or a fruitlessly brooding dreamer! There was something in him, something wild, lawless, uncivilized, that first had to be broken, a dangerous flame that first had to be put out and stamped out. Man as nature creates him is something incalculable, opaque, hostile. He is a torrent breaking out of an unknown mountain, and he is a primeval forest without path or order. And just as a primeval forest must be thinned and

cleared and forcibly restrained, so the school must break, conquer, and forcibly restrain natural man; its task is to make him a useful member of society according to principles approved from above, and to awaken in him the qualities whose complete development is then crowned and concluded by the careful discipline of the barracks.

How nicely little Giebenrath had developed! Roaming and playing he had given up almost by himself; the silly laughing in lessons had long since stopped with him; and gardening, keeping rabbits, and that tiresome fishing too he had let himself be broken of.

One evening the rector appeared in person at the Giebenrath house. After politely getting rid of the flattered father, he stepped into Hans's room and found the boy sitting over the Gospel of Luke. He greeted him most kindly.

"That's fine, Giebenrath, busy again already! But why don't you show yourself at all anymore? I expected you every day."

"I would have come," Hans apologized, "but I wanted at least to bring you a nice fish."

"Fish? What sort of fish?"

"Well, a carp or something."

"Oh, I see. So you're fishing again?"

"Yes, just a little. Father allowed it."

"Hm. I see. Do you enjoy it a lot?"

"Yes, I do."

"Good, very good, you've honestly earned your holidays, after all. So you probably don't much feel like studying on the side now?"

"Oh yes, sir, of course I do."

"But I wouldn't want to force anything on you that you don't want to do yourself."

"Of course I want to."

The rector took a few deep breaths, stroked his thin beard, and sat down on a chair.

“You see, Hans,” he said, “the matter stands like this. Experience has long shown that a sudden setback often follows precisely on a very good examination. At the seminary you have to work your way into several new subjects. Now there are always a number of pupils who arrive having worked ahead in the holidays—often just those who did less well in the examination. They then suddenly move up, at the expense of those who have rested on their laurels during the vacation.”

He sighed again.

“Here at school it was easy for you to be first all the time. But at the seminary you will find other classmates, all of them gifted or very industrious people, who won’t let themselves be overtaken so easily. You understand that?”

“Oh yes.”

“Now I wanted to suggest that you work ahead a little in these holidays. In moderation, of course! You have the right and the duty to rest thoroughly now. I thought an hour or two a day would be about right. Without that it is easy to get out of the groove, and afterward it takes weeks before you are running smoothly again. What do you think?”

“I’m quite ready, sir, if you would be so kind...”

“Good. Next to Hebrew it will be Homer above all who opens up a new world for you at the seminary. You would read him with twice the enjoyment and understanding if we laid a solid foundation now. Homer’s language, the old Ionic dialect together with Homeric prosody, is something quite peculiar, quite a thing of its own, and demands diligence and thoroughness if one is to come to a real enjoyment of these poems at all.”

Of course Hans was glad to make his way into this new world too, and promised to do his best.

But the worst was still to come. The rector cleared his throat and went on in a friendly way: "To be frank, I would also be glad if you would devote a few hours to mathematics. You are not a bad arithmetician, but mathematics has not exactly been your strong point so far. At the seminary you will have to begin algebra and geometry, and so it would surely be advisable to take a few preparatory lessons."

"Yes, sir."

"You are always welcome at my house, you know that. It is a point of honor with me to see something fine become of you. But for the mathematics you would have to ask your father to let you take private lessons with the professor. Perhaps three or four a week."

"Yes, sir."



Work was now in the most gratifying bloom again, and when Hans did go fishing or walking for an hour now and then, he had a bad conscience. The self-sacrificing mathematics teacher had chosen the usual swimming hour for his lessons.

With all his diligence, Hans could not find these algebra lessons enjoyable. It was bitter, after all, in the middle of a hot afternoon, to go into the professor's warm room instead of to the bathing meadow, and in the dusty air humming with gnats, with a tired head and a dry voice, to recite the $a + b$ and $a - b$. There was something paralyzing and exceedingly oppressive in the air then, which on bad days could turn into hopelessness and despair. Mathematics was altogether a strange thing for him. He was not one of those pupils to whom it is closed and impossible to grasp; he sometimes found good, even elegant solutions and then took pleasure in them. What he liked about mathematics was that there

were no errors and no humbug here, no chance of straying from the subject and grazing deceptive side issues. For the same reason he liked Latin so much, for this language is clear, sure, unambiguous, and knows almost no doubts. But even when all the results in arithmetic came out right, nothing real ever came of it. The mathematical work and lessons seemed to him like walking along a level highway: you always get ahead, every day you understand something you did not understand yesterday, but you never came to a mountain where wide views suddenly opened up.

Things were somewhat livelier in the lessons with the rector. True, the town pastor still knew how to make something far more attractive and splendid out of the degenerate Greek of the New Testament than the rector made out of the youthfully fresh language of Homer. But it was Homer after all, with whom surprises and pleasures spring up right behind the first difficulties and lure one on irresistibly. Often Hans sat before a mysteriously beautiful-sounding verse, hard to understand, full of trembling impatience and suspense, and could not find quickly enough in the dictionary the keys that opened the quiet, serene garden to him.

He had homework enough again now, and many an evening he sat again at the table until late, his teeth sunk into some task. Father Giebenrath looked on this diligence with pride. In his ponderous head there dimly lived the ideal of so many narrow and insignificant people, to see a branch from his stock grow up beyond himself to a height that he revered with dull respect.

In the last week of the holidays the rector and the town pastor suddenly showed themselves remarkably gentle and solicitous again. They sent the boy out walking, stopped their lessons, and stressed how important it was that he enter upon his new career fresh and refreshed.

Hans went fishing a few more times. He had a lot of headaches and sat without real attention on the bank of the river, which now

mirrored a light-blue early autumn sky. It was a riddle to him why he had once looked forward so much to the summer vacation. Now he was rather glad that it was over and he was going to the seminary, where a quite different life and learning would begin. Since it meant nothing to him, he hardly caught any fish anymore either, and when his father once made a joke about it, he stopped fishing and put his lines back up in the cupboard in the garret.

Only in the last days did it suddenly occur to him that he had not been to Flaig the shoemaker's for weeks. Even now he had to force himself to go to see him. It was evening, and the master was sitting at the window of his living room with a small child on each knee. Although the window stood open, the smell of leather and blacking filled the whole apartment. Self-consciously Hans laid his hand in the master's hard, broad right hand.

"Well, how are things?" the master asked. "Have you been going to the town pastor faithfully?"

"Yes, I was there every day and learned a lot."

"What, then?"

"Mainly Greek, but all sorts of other things too."

"And you didn't care to come to me anymore?"

"I cared to, Master Flaig, but it never seemed to work out. An hour at the town pastor's every day, two hours at the rector's every day, and four times a week I had to go to the arithmetic teacher."

"Now, in the holidays? That's nonsense!"

"I don't know. The teachers thought so. And studying isn't hard for me, after all."

"Maybe so," said Flaig, and took hold of the boy's arm. "The studying would be all right, but what sort of skinny little arms have you got there? And your face is so thin too. Do you still have headaches?"

"Now and then."

“It’s nonsense, Hans, and a sin besides. At your age you have to have proper air and exercise and proper rest. What do they give you holidays for? Surely not for sitting in your room and going on studying. You’re nothing but skin and bones.”

Hans laughed.

“Well, all right, you’ll get through. But too much is too much. And the lessons at the town pastor’s, how have they gone? What did he say?”

“He said lots of things, but nothing bad at all. He knows a tremendous lot.”

“Did he never speak disrespectfully of the Bible?”

“No, not one single time.”

“That’s good. For I tell you this: better be ruined ten times in body than take harm to your soul! You want to become a pastor later on; that’s a precious and a hard office, and it takes different people from what most of you young folk are. Maybe you’re the right one and will one day be a helper and teacher of souls. I wish it with all my heart and will pray for it.”

He had stood up and now laid both hands firmly on the boy’s shoulders.

“Farewell, Hans, and abide in what is good! The Lord bless thee and keep thee, Amen.”

The solemnity, the praying, and the speaking in High German instead of his everyday dialect were oppressive and embarrassing to the boy. The town pastor had done nothing of the kind when they said goodbye.

With preparations and leave-takings the few days passed quickly and restlessly. A chest with bedding, clothes, linen, and books had already been sent off; now the traveling bag was packed too, and one cool morning father and son set off for Maulbronn. It was strange and depressing, after all, to leave home and move away from his father’s house into a strange institution.

Chapter Three

In the far northwest of the land, between wooded hills and small quiet lakes, lies the great Cistercian monastery of Maulbronn. The beautiful old buildings stand spacious, solid, and well preserved, and would make an inviting dwelling, for they are splendid, inside and out, and over the centuries have grown nobly and intimately together with their calm, lovely green surroundings. Whoever wants to visit the monastery passes through a picturesque gate that opens the high wall and comes out onto a wide and very quiet square. A fountain runs there, and old, grave trees stand there, and on both sides old, solid stone houses, and in the background the front of the mighty main church with a late Romanesque porch, called the Paradise, of a graceful, enchanting beauty without equal. On the massive roof of the church rides a needle-pointed, humorous little tower of which one cannot understand how it is supposed to carry a bell. The undamaged cloister, itself a beautiful work, holds as its jewel an exquisite fountain chapel; the monks' refectory with its strong, noble ribbed vaulting, a wonderful room, then the oratory, the parlatorium, the lay brothers' refectory, the abbot's lodging, and two churches are joined massively to one another. Picturesque walls, oriels, gates, little gardens, a mill, and dwelling houses wreath the ponderous old buildings comfortably and cheerfully. The wide forecourt lies quiet and empty and plays in its sleep with the shadows of its trees; only in the hour after noon does a fleeting semblance of life come over it. Then a troop of young people comes out of the monastery, scatters over the wide space, brings a little movement, calling, talk, and laughter

with it, perhaps plays a ball game as well, and when the hour is up disappears quickly and without a trace behind the walls. Many a person has thought on this square that here would be the place for a good stretch of life and joy, that something living and gladdening ought to be able to grow here, that here ripe and good men ought to think their joyful thoughts and create beautiful, serene works.

In loving solicitude the government has given over this splendid monastery, lying far from the world, hidden behind hills and woods, to the pupils of the Protestant theological seminary, so that beauty and quiet may surround the receptive young minds. At the same time the young people are removed there from the distracting influences of the towns and of family life and are kept from the harmful sight of active life. This makes it possible, for years, to let the study of the Hebrew and Greek languages, along with subsidiary subjects, appear to the youths in all earnestness as the goal of life, and to turn the whole thirst of their young souls toward pure and ideal studies and pleasures. Added to this, as an important factor, is life in a boarding school, the compulsion to educate oneself, the feeling of belonging together. The government, at whose expense the seminarians are permitted to live and study, has thereby seen to it that its pupils become children of a particular spirit, by which they can be recognized at any time later on—a fine and sure kind of branding and a meaningful symbol of voluntary serfdom. With the exception of the wild ones who now and then break loose, one can in fact recognize every Swabian seminarian as such all his life. How different people are, and how different the surroundings and circumstances in which they grow up! The government evens this out justly and thoroughly among its wards, by a kind of spiritual uniform or livery.

Whoever still had a mother when he entered the monastery seminary thinks back on those days all his life with gratitude and smiling emotion. That was not Hans Giebenrath's case, and he got

through them without any emotion, but he was able to observe a great number of other people's mothers and received a strange impression from them.

In the big corridors lined with wall cupboards, the so-called dorments, chests and baskets stood about, and the boys, accompanied by their parents, were busy unpacking and putting away their belongings. Each had been assigned his numbered cupboard, and in the study rooms his numbered bookshelf. Sons and parents knelt on the floor unpacking; the porter moved among them like a prince and now and then gave well-meant advice. Unpacked clothes were spread out, shirts folded, books stacked, boots and slippers set out in rows. The outfit was the same for all in its main pieces, for the minimum number of pieces of linen to be brought and the essentials of the other household goods were prescribed. Tin washbasins with names scratched into them came to light and were set up in the washroom, with sponge, soap dish, comb, and toothbrushes beside them. In addition each boy had brought a lamp, a can of kerosene, and a knife, fork, and spoon.

The boys were all exceedingly busy and excited. The fathers smiled, tried to help, often looked at their pocket watches, were rather bored, and made attempts to slip away. But the soul of the whole activity was the mothers. Piece by piece they took the clothes and linen in hand, smoothed out creases, straightened ribbons, and, with careful trying, distributed the pieces in the cupboard as neatly and practically as possible. Admonitions, advice, and tenderesses flowed in with it all.

"You must take special care of the new shirts; they cost three marks fifty."

"You'll send your laundry home every four weeks by rail—if it's urgent, by post. The black hat is only for Sundays."

A stout, comfortable woman sat on a tall chest and taught her son the art of sewing on buttons.

“If you’re homesick,” it was said elsewhere, “just write to me as often as you like. It isn’t so terribly long till Christmas.”

A pretty, still fairly young woman surveyed her little son’s filled cupboard and passed a caressing hand over the little piles of linen and the jackets and trousers. When she was done with that, she began to stroke her boy, a broad-shouldered, chubby-cheeked fellow. He was ashamed and fended her off with an embarrassed laugh, and on top of that, so as not to look tender on any account, stuck both hands into his trouser pockets. The parting seemed to be harder for the mother than for him.

With others it was the other way around. They looked at their busy mothers, at a loss what to do or say, and looked as if they would have liked best to go back home with them. But in all of them the fear of parting and the heightened feeling of tenderness and attachment lay in a hard struggle with shyness before onlookers and with the defiant sense of dignity of first manhood. Many a boy who would have liked best to howl now put on an artificially carefree face and acted as though nothing touched him. And the mothers smiled at it.

Almost all of them took out of their chests, besides the bare necessities, a few luxuries as well, a little sack of apples, a smoked sausage, a little basket of pastries, and the like. Many had brought skates. A colossal sensation was caused by a small, sly-looking youth through his possession of a whole ham, which he made no attempt whatever to hide.

One could easily tell which of the boys came directly from home and which had been at institutes and boarding schools before. But in these too one could see the excitement and suspense.

Mr. Giebenrath helped his son unpack and behaved cleverly and practically in doing so. He was finished sooner than most of the others and stood about in the dorment with Hans for a while,

bored and helpless. Since on all sides he saw admonishing and instructing fathers, comforting and advising mothers, and sons listening in anxiety, he too thought it fitting to give his Hans a few golden words to take with him on his way through life. He thought for a long time and crept tormentedly along beside the silent boy; then he suddenly launched forth and brought out a little anthology of solemn phrases, which Hans received in silent astonishment, until he saw a pastor standing nearby smiling with amusement at the paternal speech; then he was ashamed and drew the speaker aside.

“So, you’ll do your family honor, won’t you? And obey your superiors?”

“Yes, of course,” said Hans.

His father fell silent and breathed a sigh of relief. He was beginning to be miserably bored. Hans too felt rather lost; now he looked down with anxious curiosity through the windows into the quiet cloister, whose ancient, hermitlike dignity and calm stood in strange contrast to the young life making noise up here, now he shyly watched his busy classmates, not one of whom he knew yet. The boy from Göppingen whom he had met at the examination in Stuttgart, for all his sophisticated Latin, seemed not to have passed; at least Hans saw him nowhere. Without thinking much about it, he looked over his future schoolmates. However similar in kind and number the outfits of all the boys were, you could still easily tell the town boys from the farmers’ sons and the well-to-do from the poor. Sons of rich people, to be sure, seldom came to the seminary, which allows one to infer partly the pride or deeper insight of the parents and partly the gifts of the children; yet many a professor and higher official, remembering his own years in the monastery, does send his boy to Maulbronn. So among the forty little black coats there was a good deal of difference in cloth and cut, and the young people differed still more in manners, dialect,

and bearing. There were lean Black Foresters with stiff limbs, lusty sons of the Alb, straw-blond and wide-mouthed, nimble lowlanders with free and cheerful manners, fine boys from Stuttgart with pointed boots and a spoiled, that is to say refined, dialect. Nearly a fifth of this flower of youth wore spectacles. One of them, a slight and almost elegant mother's darling from Stuttgart, was got up in a stiff, fine felt hat, behaved like a gentleman, and did not suspect that this unaccustomed ornament was already, on the very first day, making the bolder ones among his classmates itch for later teasing and acts of violence.

A more perceptive onlooker could well see that the timid little band was no bad selection from the youth of the land. Next to average heads, on whom you could see from afar the funnel that had poured their learning in, there was no lack either of fine fellows or of defiantly firm ones, behind whose smooth foreheads a higher life might still lie half in a dream. Perhaps there was one or another among them of those shrewd and stubborn Swabian skulls that now and then in the course of time have pushed their way into the middle of the great world and made their always somewhat dry and obstinate thoughts the center of new, powerful systems. For Swabia supplies itself and the world not only with the best-bred theologians, but also commands with pride a traditional capacity for philosophical speculation, from which more than once considerable prophets, or heretics too, have sprung. And so the fertile land, whose great political traditions lie far behind it and which now nestles like a harmless chick against the sharp-beaked eagle of the north, still exercises its sure influence on the world at least in the intellectual fields of divinity and philosophy. Besides this, there has been in the people from of old a delight in beautiful form and dreamy poetry, out of which from time to time rhymers and poets grow up who are not among the bad ones. Lately, to be sure, they count for little, for in poetry too our gentlemen broth-

ers living farther north have taken over the leadership, find the southern speech uncouth, and with their sharper tongues set the tone, which is directed now at the smell of the soil, now at Berlin elegance, and which is, admittedly, far superior to our old-fashioned lyre in smartness. Unfortunately it will not do, here or anywhere else, to rear up against it and to rub off those proud Berliners' still very young patina. Besides, we gladly grant everyone his own: to us Swabians our old Hohenstaufen, where above quiet woods the few remains of ancient glory slumber and dream, and to the others their Hohenzollern, where smooth, painfully clean drives lead past gleaming cannon. There is something to be said for both, after all.

In the arrangements and customs of the Maulbronn seminary, looked at from the outside, there was nothing Swabian to be felt; on the contrary, besides the Latin names left over from monastic times, many a classical label had lately been pasted on as well. The rooms into which the pupils were divided were called Forum, Hellas, Athens, Sparta, Acropolis, and the fact that the smallest and last was called Germania almost seemed to suggest that there were reasons to make out of the Germanic present, as far as possible, a Roman and Greek dream image. But this too was again merely outward, and in truth Hebrew names would have suited better. And so happy chance would have it that the Athens room got as its occupants not, say, the most broad-minded and eloquent people, but precisely a couple of upright bores, and that Sparta was inhabited not by warriors and ascetics but by a handful of jolly and free-living guest students. Hans Giebenrath was assigned to the Hellas room, together with nine classmates.

He did have a strange feeling at heart when that evening, for the first time, he entered the cool, bare dormitory together with the nine and lay down in his narrow school bed. A big kerosene lantern hung from the ceiling, by whose red light they undressed

and which was put out by the porter at a quarter past ten. There they lay now, one beside the other; between every two beds stood a little chair with clothes on it; from the pillar hung the rope by which the morning bell is rung. Two or three of the boys already knew each other and exchanged a few timid whispered words, which soon fell silent; the others were strangers to one another, and each lay a little oppressed and deathly still in his bed. Those who had fallen asleep could be heard breathing deeply, or one of them moved his arm in his sleep so that the linen cover rustled; whoever was still awake kept quite still. Hans could not fall asleep for a long time. He listened to the breathing of his neighbors and after a while heard a strangely anxious sound from the bed next but one; someone lay there crying, the blanket pulled over his head, and the soft sobbing, which sounded as if from far away, stirred Hans strangely. He himself was not homesick, but he was sorry for the quiet little room he had had at home; and to that was added a timid dread of the uncertain new life and of all the many classmates. It was not yet midnight when no one in the dormitory was awake anymore. Side by side lay the young sleepers, cheeks pressed into the striped pillows, sad ones and defiant ones, merry ones and timid ones, overcome by the same sweet, deep rest and forgetting. Over the old pointed roofs, towers, oriels, pinnacles, battlements, and pointed-arched galleries a pale half-moon rose; its light settled on cornices and thresholds, flowed over Gothic windows and Romanesque gates, and trembled pale gold in the great, noble basin of the cloister fountain. A few yellowish streaks and patches of light fell through the three windows into the Hellas dormitory too, and dwelt beside the dreams of the sleeping boys as neighborly as once beside those of the generations of monks.

On the following day the solemn ceremony of admission took place in the oratory. The teachers stood there in frock coats, the ephorus, as the head of the seminary is called, gave an address, the

pupils sat thoughtfully bent forward in their chairs and now and then tried to steal a glance back at their parents sitting farther behind. The mothers gazed pensively and smilingly at their sons; the fathers held themselves upright, followed the speech, and looked serious and resolute. Proud and praiseworthy feelings and fine hopes swelled their breasts, and not a single one thought that today he was selling his child to the state for a financial advantage. At the end one pupil after another was called up by name, stepped before the rows, was received and bound to his duty by the ephorus with a handshake, and was thereby, provided he behaved himself, provided for and housed by the state until the end of his life. That they might perhaps not have all this entirely for nothing, none of them gave any thought, any more than the fathers did.

The moment when they had to take leave of father and mother seemed far more serious and moving to them. Some on foot, some in the mail coach, some in all sorts of vehicles caught up in haste, the parents vanished from the sight of the sons left behind; handkerchiefs waved for a long while yet through the mild September air; finally the woods took in the departing ones, and the sons went back into the monastery, quiet and thoughtful.

“So, now the lady and gentleman parents have left,” said the porter.

Now they began to look at one another and get acquainted, at first each room among itself. They filled their inkwells with ink, their lamps with oil, arranged books and notebooks, and tried to feel at home in the new room. Meanwhile they looked at one another curiously, began a conversation, asked one another about their home towns and their schools so far, and recalled the state examination they had sweated through together. Groups formed chatting around particular desks; here and there a bright boyish laugh ventured out; and by evening the roommates were already

much better acquainted with one another than ship's passengers at the end of a sea voyage.

Among the nine classmates who lived with Hans in the Hellas room there were four decided characters; the rest belonged more or less to the good average. First of all there was Otto Hartner, a professor's son from Stuttgart, gifted, calm, self-assured, and faultless in his conduct. He was broad and stately in build and well dressed, and he impressed the room with his firm, capable manner.

Then Karl Hamel, the son of a small village mayor from the Alb. It took some time to get to know him, for he was full of contradictions and seldom came out of his apparent phlegm. When he did, he was passionate, boisterous, and violent, but it never lasted long before he crept back into himself, and then you did not know whether he was a quiet observer or only a sneak.

A striking, though less complicated figure was Hermann Heilner, a Black Forester from a good family. On the very first day it was known that he was a poet and an aesthete, and the story went around that he had written his composition in the state examination in hexameters. He talked a great deal and vivaciously, owned a beautiful violin, and seemed to wear his nature on the surface, a nature that consisted mainly of a youthfully unripe mixture of sentimentality and frivolity. But less visibly he carried deeper things in him as well. He was developed beyond his years in body and soul and was already beginning, tentatively, to go his own ways.

The oddest inhabitant of Hellas, however, was Emil Lucius, a secretive, pale-blond little man, tough, industrious, and dry as an old peasant. In spite of his unformed build and features he did not give the impression of a boy, but had something grown-up about him everywhere, as though there were simply nothing left to change in him. On the very first day, while the others were bored,

chatted, and tried to get used to things, he sat quiet and composed over a grammar, his ears stopped with his thumbs, and studied away as though it were a matter of making up for lost years.

It was only little by little that they found out the tricks of this quiet odd fish, and they found him so refined a skinflint and egoist that his very perfection in these vices earned him a kind of respect, or at least tolerance. He had a cunning system of saving and profit, whose individual refinements came to light only gradually and aroused astonishment. It began early in the morning on getting up, with Lucius entering the washroom either first or last, so as to use another boy's towel and if possible his soap too and spare his own things. In this way he managed to make his towel always last two weeks and more. Now, the towels had to be changed once a week, and every Monday morning the head porter made an inspection of this. So every Monday morning Lucius too hung a fresh towel on his numbered nail, but took it away again in the noon break, folded it neatly, put it back in his cupboard, and hung up the spared old one again in its place. His soap was hard and gave little, but for that it lasted for months. Emil Lucius was not on that account in the least neglected in his appearance, though; he always looked neat, combed and parted his thin blond hair with care, and took the best possible care of his linen and clothes.

From the washroom they went to breakfast. With it came a cup of coffee, a lump of sugar, and a roll. Most of them did not find this lavish, for young people usually have a hearty morning hunger after eight hours of sleep. Lucius was content, saved his daily lump of sugar by denying it to his own mouth, and always found buyers for it, two lumps for a pfennig or twenty-five lumps for an exercise book. That in the evening, to save the expensive oil, he liked to work by the light of other people's lamps goes without saying. And he was not the child of poor parents, either, but came from quite

comfortable circumstances, as indeed the children of truly poor people seldom know how to manage and save, but always spend as much as they have and know nothing of putting by.

Emil Lucius extended his system not only to material possessions and tangible goods, however, but also tried, wherever he could, to get his advantage out of the kingdom of the mind. Here he was clever enough never to forget that all intellectual possessions have only a relative value; therefore he applied real diligence only to the subjects whose cultivation could bear fruit in a later examination, and in the others contented himself modestly with a moderate average mark. He always measured what he learned and achieved only against the achievements of his schoolmates, and he would rather have been first with half the knowledge than second with double. That was why in the evenings, when his classmates gave themselves up to all sorts of pastimes, games, and reading, he could be seen sitting quietly at work. The noise of the others did not disturb him in the least; he even cast an occasional pleased glance at it, without envy. For if all the others had worked too, his trouble would not have paid, after all.

No one held all these dodges and tricks against the industrious grind. But like all who overdo things and are too intent on profit, he too soon took a step into folly. Since all instruction in the monastery was free, he hit upon the idea of taking advantage of this and having violin lessons given to him. Not that he had any previous training, any ear and talent, or even any pleasure whatever in music! But he thought that, after all, one could learn to fiddle as well as Latin or arithmetic. Music, as he had heard said, was useful in later life and made its man liked and agreeable, and in any case the thing cost nothing, for the seminary provided a school violin as well.

Haas, the music teacher, felt his hair stand on end when Lucius came to him and wanted violin lessons, for he knew him from the

singing lessons, in which Lucius's performances, it was true, delighted all his schoolmates highly, but drove the teacher to despair. He tried to talk the boy out of it; but here he had come to the wrong man. Lucius smiled finely and modestly, appealed to his good right, and declared his desire for music irresistible. So he was handed the worst of the practice violins, received two lessons a week, and practiced his half hour every day. After the first practice hour, however, his roommates declared that this had been the first and last time and that they would not put up with the hideous moaning. From then on Lucius roamed restlessly through the monastery with his violin, looking for quiet corners to practice in, from which strange sounds then came forth, scratching, squealing, and whimpering, and alarmed the neighborhood. It was, said the poet Heilner, as though the tormented old violin were begging desperately for mercy out of all its wormholes. Since no progress followed, the tortured teacher became nervous and rude; Lucius practiced more and more desperately, and his shopkeeper's face, self-satisfied until then, put on bitter lines of worry. It was a pure tragedy, for when in the end the teacher declared him completely incapable and refused to go on with the lessons, the infatuated lover of learning chose the piano and tormented himself with that too through long, fruitless months, until he was worn down and quietly gave it up. In later years, though, when there was talk of music, he would let it be understood that he too had once learned both piano and violin and had only gradually, unfortunately, been estranged from these fine arts by circumstances.

So the Hellas room was often in a position to amuse itself over its comic inhabitants, for the aesthete Heilner too staged many a ridiculous scene. Karl Hamel played the ironist and witty observer. He was a year older than the others, which gave him a certain superiority, but he never achieved a respected part; he was moody

and felt the need about once a week to test his bodily strength in a scuffle, in which he was wild and almost cruel.

Hans Giebenrath looked on at this with astonishment and went his own quiet way as a good but reserved classmate. He was industrious, almost as industrious as Lucius, and enjoyed the respect of his roommates, with the exception of Heilner, who had written brilliant recklessness on his banner and now and then mocked him as a grind. On the whole all these many boys, in the midst of the rapid development of their years, got along well with one another, even if evening brawls in the dorments were nothing rare. For though they strove zealously to feel grown-up and to justify, by scholarly seriousness and good behavior, the teachers' still unaccustomed way of calling them *Sie*, and though they looked back on the Latin school they had just left at least as arrogantly and pityingly as a new university student looks back on the gymnasium, still now and again an unadulterated boyishness broke through the artificial dignity and wanted its rights. Then the dorment rang with lusty blows through the air and well-salted boyish curses.



For the director or teacher of such an institution it must be instructive and delightful to watch how, after the first weeks of living together, the band of boys resembles a chemical mixture settling, in which wavering clouds and flakes clump together, dissolve again, and form differently, until a number of firm structures are there. After the first shyness had been overcome and all of them had come to know one another well enough, there began a surging and a seeking about among one another; groups came together; friendships and antipathies came to light. Seldom did boys from the same district or former schoolmates join together; most turned to new acquaintances, town boys to farmers' sons, boys

from the Alb to lowlanders, following a secret urge toward variety and completion. The young creatures groped for one another uncertainly; beside the awareness of equality appeared the desire to stand apart; and in many a boy the budding formation of a personality woke for the first time out of the slumber of childhood. Indescribable little scenes of affection and jealousy were played out, grew into alliances of friendship and into declared, defiant enmities, and ended, as the case might be, in tender relationships and friendly walks or in sharp wrestling and fistfights.

Hans took no outward part in these goings-on. Karl Hamel had offered him his friendship plainly and impetuously, and he had shrunk back in alarm. Right afterward Hamel had made friends with an inhabitant of Sparta; Hans had remained alone. A strong feeling made the land of friendship appear to him blissfully on the horizon in longing colors and drew him toward it with a quiet urge. But a shyness held him back. In his strict, motherless boyhood the gift of drawing close had withered in him, and he had a horror of everything outwardly enthusiastic. Added to this was his boyish pride and, finally, his wretched ambition. He was not like Lucius; he really cared about knowledge; but like Lucius he tried to keep away from himself everything that could take him from his work. So he stayed diligently at his desk, but suffered envy and longing when he saw others enjoying their friendships. Karl Hamel had been the wrong one, but if anyone else had come and tried to draw him strongly to himself, he would gladly have followed. Like a shy girl he stayed sitting and waited to see whether someone would come to fetch him, someone stronger and bolder than he, who would carry him away and force him to be happy.

Since, besides these concerns, the lessons, especially in Hebrew, gave them a great deal to do, the first period passed very quickly for the youths. The many small lakes and ponds by which Maulbronn is surrounded mirrored pale late-autumn skies, with-

ering ashes, birches, and oaks, and long twilights; through the beautiful forests the last wild dance before winter raged, groaning and exulting; and several times already a light frost had fallen.

The lyrical Hermann Heilner had tried in vain to win a kindred friend; now every day in the free hour he roamed alone through the woods, and he favored especially the forest lake, a melancholy brown pond, ringed with reeds and overhung by old, withering crowns of leaves. The sadly beautiful corner of the woods drew the enthusiast powerfully. Here he could draw circles in the still water with a dreamy switch, read Lenau's reed songs, and, lying among the low rushes on the shore, muse on the autumnal theme of dying and passing away, while the fall of leaves and the rustling of bare treetops gave melancholy chords to it. Then he would often take a little black notebook out of his pocket to write a verse or two in it with a pencil.

He was doing this too at a half-bright noon hour late in October when Hans Giebenrath, out walking alone, came to the same place. He saw the young poet sitting on the plank walk of the little sluice gate, his notebook in his lap and the sharpened pencil stuck thoughtfully in his mouth. An open book lay beside him. Slowly Hans came up to him.

"Hello, Heilner. What are you up to?"

"Reading Homer. And you, little Giebenrath?"

"I don't believe it. I know what you're doing."

"Oh?"

"Of course. You've been writing poetry."

"You think so?"

"Sure."

"Sit down here!"

Giebenrath sat down beside Heilner on the plank, let his legs dangle over the water, and watched how here and there one

brown leaf and then another came turning down through the still, cool air and sank unheard onto the brownish surface of the water.

"It's dreary here," said Hans.

"Yes, yes."

Both of them had stretched out full length on their backs, so that of the autumnal surroundings hardly more than a few overhanging treetops remained visible to them, and instead the light-blue sky came forward with calmly floating islands of cloud.

"What beautiful clouds!" said Hans, gazing contentedly.

"Yes, little Giebenrath," Heilner sighed, "if only one were a cloud like that!"

"What then?"

"Then we would sail along up there, away over woods and villages and districts and countries, like beautiful ships. Have you never seen a ship?"

"No, Heilner. But you have?"

"Oh yes. But good Lord, you don't understand anything about such things. As long as you can study and strive and cram!"

"So you take me for a dunce?"

"I didn't say that."

"I'm not nearly as stupid as you think. But go on telling about the ships."

Heilner turned over, and in doing so very nearly fell into the water. He was lying on his stomach now, his chin dug into both hands, his elbows propped up.

"On the Rhine," he went on, "I saw ships like that, in the holidays. Once on a Sunday there was music on the ship, at night, and colored lanterns. The lights were mirrored in the water, and we went downstream with music. People drank Rhine wine, and the girls had white dresses on."

Hans listened and made no reply, but he had closed his eyes and saw the ship going through the summer night, with music and

red lights and girls in white dresses. The other went on: "Yes, that was different from now. Who here knows anything about such things? Nothing but bores, nothing but sneaks! They toil and drudge and know nothing higher than the Hebrew alphabet. You're no different yourself."

Hans said nothing. This Heilner really was a strange fellow. An enthusiast, a poet. He had often wondered about him. Heilner did precious little work, as everyone knew, and in spite of that he knew a lot, knew how to give good answers, and yet despised this knowledge too.

"We read Homer," he went on jeering, "as if the *Odyssey* were a cookbook. Two verses an hour, and then it's chewed over and examined word for word until you're sick of it. But at the end of the hour every time it's: You see how finely the poet turned that, here you have had a glimpse into the secret of poetic creation! Just as a sauce around the particles and aorists, so that you don't choke on them altogether. That way they can keep the whole of Homer, for all I care. Anyway, what does the old Greek stuff really have to do with us? If one of us ever wanted to try living a little bit like a Greek, he'd be thrown out. And our room is called *Hellas*, of all things! Pure mockery! Why isn't it called 'Wastebasket' or 'Slave Cage' or 'Fear Hole'? The whole classical business is humbug."

He spat into the air.

"Say, were you writing verses just now?" Hans now asked.

"Yes."

"What about?"

"About this place, about the lake and about the autumn."

"Show me!"

"No, it isn't finished yet."

"But when it's finished?"

"Yes, all right."

The two of them got up and walked slowly back into the monastery.

"There, have you ever actually seen how beautiful that is?" said Heilner as they passed the Paradise. "Halls, arched windows, cloisters, refectories, Gothic and Romanesque, all rich and artful and the work of artists. And what is the magic for? For three dozen poor boys who want to be pastors. The state can afford it."

Hans had to think about Heilner the whole afternoon. What sort of person was he? The worries and wishes Hans knew did not exist at all for the other. He had his own thoughts and words; he lived more warmly and freely, suffered strange sufferings, and seemed to despise everything around him. He understood the beauty of the old columns and walls. And he practiced the mysterious, strange art of mirroring his soul in verses and building himself a life of his own out of his imagination, a life that only seemed to be alive. He was lively and unruly and made more jokes every day than Hans did in a year. He was melancholy and seemed to enjoy his own sadness as a foreign, unusual, and precious thing.

That very evening Heilner gave the whole room a sample of his motley and striking nature. One of his classmates, a braggart and small mind named Otto Wenger, started a quarrel with him. For a while Heilner stayed calm, witty, and superior; then he let himself be carried away into dealing a box on the ear, and at once the two opponents were passionately and inextricably tangled together and locked in each other and drifted like a rudderless ship, in lurches and half circles and convulsions, through Hellas, along the walls, over chairs, on the floor, both without a word, panting, spluttering, and foaming. Their classmates stood by watching with critical faces, got out of the way of the tangle, saved their legs, desks, and lamps, and awaited the outcome in happy suspense. After a few minutes Heilner struggled up, freed himself, and stood there breathing hard. He looked battered, had red eyes, a torn

shirt collar, and a hole in the knee of his trousers. His opponent wanted to attack him again, but he stood there with folded arms and said haughtily, "I'm not going on—if you want, go ahead and hit me." Otto Wenger went away cursing. Heilner leaned against his desk, turned the standing lamp, put his hands in his trouser pockets, and seemed to be trying to remember something. Suddenly tears broke from his eyes, one after another and more and more. That was unheard of, for crying was without doubt considered the most disgraceful thing a seminarian could do. And he did nothing at all to hide it. He did not leave the room; he stood still, his face, which had turned pale, toward the lamp; he did not wipe away the tears and did not even take his hands out of his pockets. The others stood around him, watching curiously and maliciously, until Hartner planted himself in front of him and said to him, "Say, Heilner, aren't you ashamed of yourself?"

The weeping boy looked slowly around him, like someone just waking from a deep sleep.

"Ashamed—in front of you?" he then said loudly and contemptuously. "No, my good fellow."

He wiped his face, smiled with annoyance, blew out his lamp, and went out of the room.

Hans Giebenrath had stayed at his place during the whole scene and had only peered over at Heilner in astonishment and alarm. A quarter of an hour later he ventured to go after the one who had vanished. He saw him sitting in the dark, frosty dorment on one of the deep window seats, motionless, looking down into the cloister. From behind, his shoulders and his narrow, sharp head looked peculiarly serious and unboyish. He did not stir when Hans came up to him and stopped at the window, and only after a while, without turning his face, did he ask in a hoarse voice, "What is it?"

"It's me," said Hans shyly.

“What do you want?”

“Nothing.”

“Oh? Then you can go away again.”

Hans was hurt and really did want to go away. Then Heilner held him back.

“Wait,” he said in an artificially joking tone, “I didn’t mean it like that.”

Now they both looked each other in the face, and probably each of them at that moment looked seriously at the other’s face for the first time and tried to imagine that behind these youthfully smooth features there dwelt a particular human life with its own peculiarities and a particular soul, marked in its own way.

Slowly Hermann Heilner stretched out his arm, took Hans by the shoulder, and drew him toward himself until their faces were quite close to each other. Then Hans suddenly felt, with a strange shock, the other’s lips touch his mouth.

His heart beat with a quite unaccustomed tightness. This being together in the dark dorment and this sudden kiss were something adventurous, new, perhaps dangerous; it occurred to him how horrible it would have been to be caught at it, for a sure feeling told him that this kissing would seem to the others far more ridiculous and shameful than the crying before. He could not say anything, but the blood rose powerfully to his head, and he would have liked best to run away.

A grown-up who had seen the little scene might perhaps have taken a quiet pleasure in it, in the awkward, shy tenderness of a bashful declaration of friendship and in the two serious, narrow boys’ faces, both of them handsome and full of promise, still half sharing in the grace of childhood and already half shadowed by the shy, lovely defiance of youth.

Gradually the young folk had grown used to living together. They knew one another; each had a certain knowledge and idea of

each, and a great many friendships had been formed. There were pairs of friends who learned Hebrew vocabulary together, pairs of friends who drew together or went walking or read Schiller. There were good Latinists and poor mathematicians who had joined up with poor Latinists and good mathematicians in order to enjoy the fruits of cooperative work. There were also friendships whose foundation was formed by another kind of contract and community of goods. Thus the much-envied owner of the ham had found his other half in a gardener's son from Stammheim, who had the bottom of his cupboard full of beautiful apples. Once, while eating ham, he grew thirsty and asked the other for an apple and offered him some of the ham in return. They sat down together; a cautious conversation brought to light that the ham, when it was finished, would at once be replaced, and that the owner of the apples too would be able to live on his father's stores far into the spring; and so a solid relationship came about that long outlasted many a more idealistic and more stormily concluded alliance.

Only a few had remained loners, among them Lucius, whose avaricious love of art was then still in full bloom.

There were also ill-matched pairs. The most ill-matched were held to be Hermann Heilner and Hans Giebenrath, the frivolous one and the conscientious one, the poet and the grind. Both were counted, to be sure, among the clever and most gifted, but Heilner enjoyed the half-mocking reputation of a genius, while the other had the odor of the model pupil about him. But people left them pretty much alone, since each was taken up by his own friendship and liked to keep to himself.

Over these personal interests and experiences, though, school did not get short shrift. It was, rather, the great movement and rhythm beside which Lucius's music, Heilner's poetizing, and all the alliances, quarrels, and occasional brawls only ran along, trifling, as unimportant variations and little private amusements.

Above all, Hebrew gave them work. The strange, ancient language of Jehovah, a brittle, withered, and yet still mysteriously living tree, grew up before the youths' eyes, strange, gnarled, and enigmatic, striking for its curious branchings and surprising with its remarkably colored and fragrant blossoms. In its branches, hollows, and roots dwelt, gruesome or friendly, thousand-year-old spirits: fantastically terrifying dragons, naive and lovely fairy tales, wrinkled, grave, dry old men's heads beside beautiful boys and quiet-eyed girls or warlike women. What had sounded remote and dreamlike in the comfortable Luther Bible, gently veiled in Old Testament mists, now gained in the rough, genuine language blood and voice and an antiquated, ponderous, but tough and uncanny life. So at least it seemed to Heilner, who cursed the whole Pentateuch daily and hourly and yet found more life and soul in it and drew more out of it than many a patient learner who knew all the vocabulary and no longer made any mistakes in reading.

Beside it was the New Testament, where things went more tenderly, brightly, and inwardly, and whose language, though less ancient and deep and rich, was finer and filled with a young, eager, and dreamy spirit as well.

And the *Odyssey*, out of whose powerful, sonorous verses, flowing strongly and evenly along, there rose up like the white, rounded arm of a water nymph the tidings and the intimation of a vanished life, clear in form and happy, now firm and tangible in some powerfully outlined, robust stroke, now only shimmering out of a few words and verses as a dream and a lovely intimation.

Beside these the historians Xenophon and Livy disappeared, or at least stood aside modestly and almost without luster, as lesser lights.

Hans noticed with astonishment how all things looked different to his friend than to him. For Heilner there was nothing abstract, nothing he could not have imagined and painted with the colors of

his fancy. Where that would not work, he left everything lying with distaste. Mathematics was to him a sphinx laden with treacherous riddles, whose cold, evil gaze held its victims spellbound, and he gave the monster a wide berth.

The friendship of the two was a strange relationship. For Heilner it was a pleasure and a luxury, a convenience or even a whim; but for Hans it was now a treasure guarded with pride, now a great burden, hard to bear. Until then Hans had always used the evening hours for work. Now it happened almost every day that Hermann, when he had had enough of cramming, came over to him, pulled his book away, and claimed him. In the end Hans, dear as his friend was to him, trembled every evening before he came and worked twice as zealously and hastily in the compulsory study hours so as to fall behind in nothing. It was even more painful for him when Heilner began to combat his industry in theory as well.

"That's day laborer's work," he would say. "You don't do all that work gladly and of your own free will anyway, but only out of fear of the teachers or of your old man. What do you get out of it if you come out first or second? I'm twentieth, and I'm not any stupider than you grinds for that."

Hans was horrified too when he saw for the first time how Heilner treated his schoolbooks. He had once left his books in the lecture room, and since he wanted to prepare for the next geography lesson, he borrowed Heilner's atlas. To his horror he saw that Heilner had smeared whole pages with pencil. The west coast of the Iberian Peninsula had been drawn out into a grotesque profile in which the nose reached from Oporto to Lisbon and the region around Cape Finisterre was stylized into a curly ornament of locks, while Cape St. Vincent formed the handsomely twirled point of a full beard. So it went from page to page; caricatures were drawn and impudent joking verses written on the white backs of the maps, and there was no lack of ink blots either. Hans was used to

treating his books as sacred objects and jewels, and he felt these audacities half as desecrations of a temple, half as heroic deeds, criminal, but heroic all the same.

It might seem as though good Giebenrath were merely a pleasant plaything for his friend, a sort of house cat, let us say, and Hans himself sometimes thought so. But Heilner was attached to him all the same, because he needed him. He had to have someone in whom he could confide, who listened to him, who admired him. He needed someone who would listen quietly and avidly when he made his revolutionary speeches about school and life. And he also needed someone who would comfort him and in whose lap he could lay his head when he had melancholy hours. Like all such natures, the young poet suffered from fits of a groundless, slightly coquettish melancholy, whose causes are partly the quiet leave-taking of the child's soul, partly the still aimless superabundance of powers, intimations, and desires, partly the dark, uncomprehended urging of coming to manhood. Then he had a morbid need to be pitied and coddled. He had been his mother's darling, and now, as long as he was not yet ripe for the love of women, his compliant friend served him as comforter.

Often he came to Hans in the evening utterly miserable, carried him off from his work, and asked him to go out into the dorment with him. There in the cold hall or in the high, dim oratory they walked up and down side by side or sat down shivering in a window. Heilner then uttered all sorts of woeful laments, in the manner of lyrical youths who read Heine, and was wrapped in clouds of a somewhat childish sadness, which Hans could not really understand, it was true, but which made an impression on him all the same and sometimes even infected him. The sensitive aesthete was subject to his fits especially in gloomy weather, and usually the wailing and moaning reached its climax on evenings when late-autumn rain clouds darkened the sky and behind them, peer-

ing through murky veils and rifts, the sentimental moon described its course. Then he wallowed in Ossianic moods and dissolved in a misty wistfulness that poured itself out in sighs, speeches, and verses over the innocent Hans.

Oppressed and tormented by these piteous scenes of suffering, Hans threw himself with hasty zeal, in the hours left to him, into his work, which nonetheless came harder and harder to him. That the old headache came back did not surprise him much; but that he more and more often had idle, tired hours and had to goad himself to do even what was necessary, that worried him gravely. He felt dimly, it is true, that the friendship with the odd fellow was exhausting him and making some hitherto untouched part of his nature sick; but the gloomier and more tearful the other was, the sorrier Hans felt for him, and the more tender and proud the awareness of being indispensable to his friend made him.

Besides, he sensed well enough that this sickly, wistful manner was only a venting of superfluous and unhealthy impulses and did not really belong to the nature of Heilner, whom he admired loyally and sincerely. When his friend read his verses aloud or talked about his ideals as a poet or recited monologues from Schiller and Shakespeare with passion and great play of gesture, it seemed to Hans as though the other walked in the air by virtue of a magic gift that he himself lacked, moved in a divine freedom and fiery passion, and floated away from him and his kind on winged soles like a Homeric messenger of the gods. Until then the world of poets had been little known to him and unimportant; now for the first time he felt, without resistance, the deceptive power of beautifully flowing words, illusory images, and flattering rhymes, and his veneration for this world newly opened to him had grown together with his admiration for his friend into a single undivided feeling.



Meanwhile came stormy, dark November days on which one could work only a few hours without a lamp, and black nights in which the storm drove great rolling mountains of cloud through the dark heights and buffeted the old, solid monastery buildings, moaning or quarreling. The trees were completely bare now; only the mighty oaks with their gnarled branches, the kings of that tree-rich landscape, still rustled with their withered crowns of leaves, louder and more sullenly than all the other trees. Heilner was quite gloomy and lately, instead of sitting with Hans, liked to storm away alone on the violin in a remote practice room or to pick quarrels with his classmates.

One evening, when he went to look for that room, he found the aspiring Lucius there, busy practicing at a music stand. Annoyed, he went away and came back after half an hour. The other was still practicing.

“You could stop now,” Heilner snapped. “There are other people who want to practice too. Your scraping is a public nuisance anyway.”

Lucius would not give way; Heilner grew rude; and when the other calmly took up his scraping again, he kicked the music stand over, so that the sheets flew about the room and the stand struck the fiddler in the face. Lucius bent down for his music.

“I’ll tell the ephorus about this,” he said firmly.

“Good,” Heilner shouted furiously, “then tell him right away too that I threw in a kick in the pants for free.” And he was about to act on it at once.

Lucius jumped aside in flight and reached the door. His pursuer went after him, and there followed a hot and noisy chase through corridors and halls, over stairs and landings, as far as the most remote wing of the monastery, where the ephorus’s lodging lay in quiet distinction. Heilner caught up with the fugitive only just before the door of the ephorus’s study, and when the latter had

already knocked and was standing in the open door, he received the promised kick at the last moment and flew, without being able to close the door behind him anymore, like a bomb into the ruler's holy of holies.

It was an unheard-of case. The next morning the ephorus gave a brilliant speech on the degeneracy of youth; Lucius listened profoundly and approvingly; and Heilner was sentenced to a severe term of detention in the lockup.

"For several years now," the ephorus thundered at him, "no such punishment has been given here. I shall see to it that you are still thinking of it ten years from now. To the rest of you I hold up this Heilner as a deterrent example."

The whole class peered over shyly at him as he stood there pale and defiant and did not avoid the ephorus's gaze. In secret many admired him; nevertheless, at the end of the lesson, when everyone was filling the corridors noisily, he remained alone and shunned like a leper. It took courage to stand by him now.

Hans Giebenrath did not do it either. It would have been his duty, he felt that well enough, and he suffered from the feeling of his cowardice. Unhappy and ashamed, he pressed himself into a window and did not dare to look up. He felt the urge to go to his friend, and he would have given a great deal to be able to do it unnoticed. But one who has been punished with a severe term in the lockup is as good as branded in the monastery for a long time. It is known that from now on he will be specially watched, and that it is dangerous and brings one a bad reputation to have dealings with him. To the benefits the state bestows on its pupils there must correspond a sharp, strict discipline; that had already come up in the great speech at the ceremony of admission. Hans knew it too. And he succumbed in the struggle between the duty of friendship and ambition. His ideal, after all, was to get ahead, to pass famous examinations, and to play a part, but not a romantic

and dangerous one. So he stayed fearfully in his corner. He could still step forward and be brave, but from moment to moment it grew harder, and before he knew it his betrayal had become a deed. Heilner noticed it well enough. The passionate boy felt how people avoided him, and understood it, but on Hans he had relied. Beside the pain and indignation he felt now, his own former empty feelings of woe seemed hollow and ridiculous to him. For a moment he stopped beside Giebenrath. He looked pale and haughty and said softly, "You're a low coward, Giebenrath—to hell with you!" And with that he walked away, whistling under his breath, his hands in his trouser pockets.

It was a good thing that other thoughts and occupations claimed the young people's attention. A few days after that event snow suddenly fell, then came clear, frosty winter weather; one could throw snowballs and skate, and now everyone suddenly noticed too, and talked about it, that Christmas and the holidays were at the door. Heilner was paid less attention. He went about quietly and defiantly with his head held high and a haughty face, spoke to no one, and often wrote verses in a notebook that had a cover of black oilcloth and bore the title "Songs of a Monk."

On the oaks, alders, beeches, and willows hung hoarfrost and frozen snow in delicate, fantastic shapes. On the ponds the clear ice crackled in the frost. The cloister court looked like a quiet garden of marble. A happy, festive excitement went through the rooms, and the anticipation of Christmas even gave the two faultless, measured professors a slight gleam of mildness and cheerful excitement. Among teachers and pupils there was no one whom Christmas left indifferent; Heilner too began to look less dogged and miserable, and Lucius considered which books and which pair of shoes he should take with him for the holidays. In the letters that came from home stood lovely, promising things: questions

about favorite wishes, reports of baking days, hints of surprises to come, and joy at the coming reunion.

Before the trip home for the holidays the class, and the Hellas room in particular, had one more little comic episode. It had been decided to invite the teaching staff to an evening Christmas celebration, which was to take place in Hellas, as the largest room. A formal speech, two recitations, a flute solo, and a violin duet had been prepared. But now by all means a humorous number was wanted on the program too. They deliberated and negotiated, made and rejected suggestions, without coming to agreement. Then Karl Hamel said casually that the funniest thing, really, would be a violin solo by Emil Lucius. That caught on. By pleas, promises, and threats they brought the unhappy musician to lend himself to it. And now the program, which was sent to the teachers with a polite invitation, carried as a special number: "Silent Night, song for violin, performed by Emil Lucius, Virtuoso to the Court." He owed this last title to his diligent practicing in that remote music room.

The ephorus, the professors, the tutors, the music teacher, and the head porter were invited and appeared for the celebration. Sweat broke out on the music teacher's forehead when Lucius stepped up in a black tailcoat borrowed from Hartner, combed and pressed, with his gently modest smile. His very bow had the effect of an invitation to merriment. Under his fingers the song "Silent Night" became a moving lament, a groaning, painful song of sorrow; he began twice, tore and hacked the melody to pieces, beat time with his foot, and labored like a woodcutter in frosty weather.

The ephorus nodded cheerfully to the music teacher, who had turned pale with indignation.

When Lucius had begun the song for the third time and had got stuck this time too, he let the violin sink, turned to the listeners, and apologized: "It won't go. But I only been fiddling since last fall."

"That's fine, Lucius," cried the ephorus, "we thank you for your efforts. Just go on learning like this. *Per aspera ad astra!*"

On the twenty-fourth of December there was life and uproar in all the dormitories from three o'clock in the morning on. On the windows bloomed thick layers of finely leaved frost flowers; the washing water was frozen; and a cutting, thin frosty wind swept over the monastery courtyard, but no one paid any attention to it. In the refectory the big coffee pots steamed, and soon afterward the pupils, bundled in coats and shawls, were walking in dark groups over the white, faintly gleaming fields and through the silent woods toward the distant railway station. They all chattered, made jokes, and laughed loudly, and yet each of them was full besides of his secret wishes, joys, and expectations. Far and wide over the whole land, in towns and villages and on lonely farms, they knew that parents and brothers and sisters were waiting for them in warm, festively decorated rooms. For most of them it was the first Christmas for which they were traveling home from a distance, and most of them knew that they were awaited with love and with pride.

At the little railway station in the middle of the snowy woods they waited for the train in bitter cold, and they had never been together in such harmony, so agreeable and so merry. Only Heilner stayed alone and silent, and when the train came, he waited until his classmates had gotten on and then went alone into another car. When they changed trains at the next station Hans saw him once more, but the fleeting feeling of shame and remorse soon went under again in the excitement and joy of the trip home.

At home he found Papa smirking and contented, and a well-loaded table of presents awaited him. There was not a real Christmas in the Giebenrath house, to be sure. There was no singing and no festive enthusiasm; there was no mother; there was no Christmas tree. Mr. Giebenrath did not understand the art of

celebrating feasts. But he was proud of his boy and had not stinted on the presents this time. And Hans was not used to anything different; he missed nothing.

People found that he looked poorly, too thin and too pale, and asked him whether the fare at the monastery was so meager. He denied it eagerly and assured them that he was fine, only he had headaches so often. On this score the town pastor comforted him, having suffered from them himself in his younger years, and so everything was all right.

The river was frozen smooth and on the holidays full of skaters. Hans was outdoors almost the whole day, in a new suit, the green seminarian's cap on his head, grown far beyond his former school-mates into an envied higher world.

Chapter Four

Experience shows that in every class of seminarians one or more of the classmates are usually lost in the course of the four years in the monastery. Sometimes one dies and is buried with singing or taken back to his home town escorted by his friends. Sometimes one breaks loose by force or is removed for particular sins. Occasionally, though rarely and only in the upper class, it may also happen that some boy at his wits' end finds a short, dark way out of the troubles of his youth with a shot or a leap into the water.

The class of Hans Giebenrath too was to lose several classmates, and by a strange chance it happened that all of them belonged to the Hellas room.

Among its inhabitants was a modest little blond fellow named Hindinger, nicknamed Hindu, the son of a master tailor somewhere among the scattered Protestants of the Catholic Allgäu. He was a quiet citizen and only got himself talked about a little by his departure, and not too much even then. As the desk neighbor of the thrifty Virtuoso to the Court Lucius, he had had, in a friendly and modest way, a little more to do with him than with the others, but otherwise he had had no friends. Only when he was missing did they notice in Hellas that they had been fond of him as an undemanding, good neighbor and as a point of rest in the often agitated life of the room.

One day in January he joined the skaters who were going out to the Horse Pond. He had no skates, but only wanted to watch for once. Soon, though, he felt cold, and stamped around the shore to warm himself. In doing so he began to run, strayed some way

across the fields, and came to another small lake, which because of its warmer and stronger springs was only thinly frozen over. He stepped across through the reeds. There, small and light as he was, he broke through near the shore, struggled and cried out for a little while yet, and then sank unnoticed down into the dark coolness.

Only when the first afternoon lesson began at two o'clock was his absence noticed.

"Where is Hindinger?" called the tutor.

No one answered.

"Go and look in Hellas!"

But there was no trace of him there.

"He must be late; let us begin without him. We are at page seventy-four, verse seven. But I insist that this not happen again. You are to be punctual."

When it struck three and Hindinger was still missing, the teacher grew frightened and sent for the ephorus. He appeared in the classroom at once in his own exalted person, held a great inquiry, and then sent ten pupils out to search, accompanied by the porter and a tutor. A written exercise was dictated to those who stayed behind.

At four o'clock the tutor came into the lecture room without knocking and made his report to the ephorus in a whisper.

"Silence!" the ephorus commanded, and the pupils sat motionless on their benches and looked at him expectantly.

"Your classmate Hindinger," he went on softly, "appears to have drowned in a pond. You must now help to look for him. Professor Meyer will lead you; you are to follow him promptly and to the letter and take no steps whatever on your own."

Frightened and whispering, they set out, the professor at their head. From the little town a few men with ropes, poles, and boards

joined the hurrying procession. It was bitterly cold, and the sun was already standing at the edge of the woods.

And when at last the boy's small, stiff body had been found and was laid on a stretcher among the snowy rushes, it was already deep dusk. The seminarians stood about anxiously like shy birds, stared at the corpse, and rubbed their blue fingers, which had gone stiff. And only when their drowned classmate was carried before them and they followed him in silence over the snowfields were their oppressed souls suddenly touched by a shudder, and they scented grim death as deer scent the enemy.

In the miserable, freezing little band Hans Giebenrath happened to be walking beside his former friend Heilner. Both noticed their nearness at the same moment, when they had stumbled over the same unevenness in the field. It may have been that the sight of death had overwhelmed Hans and for moments convinced him of the vanity of all selfishness; in any case, when he unexpectedly saw his friend's pale face so close to him, felt an unexplained deep pain and in a sudden impulse reached for the other's hand. Heilner pulled it away from him with annoyance and looked aside, offended, and at once sought another place and disappeared into the hindmost rows of the procession.

Then the heart of Hans the model pupil beat with pain and shame, and as he marched on, stumbling over the frozen field, he could not keep the tears from running one after another down his frost-blue cheeks. He understood that there are sins and omissions that one cannot forget and that no remorse makes good, and it seemed to him as though it were not the little tailor's son but his friend Heilner who lay up there on the raised bier and was carrying the pain and anger over his faithlessness far away with him into another world, where accounts are reckoned not by marks and examinations and successes but solely by the purity or the stain of the conscience.

Meanwhile they had reached the highroad and quickly came the rest of the way into the monastery, where all the teachers, the ephorus at their head, received the dead Hindinger, who in life would have run away at the mere thought of such an honor. Teachers always look at a dead pupil with quite other eyes than at a living one; they are then convinced for a moment of the value and irretrievability of every life and every youth, against which they otherwise so often sin without a care.

That evening too, and the whole of the following day, the presence of the inconspicuous body worked like a spell, softened, muffled, and veiled all doing and speaking, so that for this short time quarreling, anger, noise, and laughter hid themselves like water nymphs that vanish for moments from the surface of a pool and leave it lying motionless and seemingly lifeless. When any two of them spoke about the drowned boy, they always called him by his full name, for in the face of the dead the nickname Hindu seemed unworthy to them. And quiet Hindu, who had otherwise disappeared unnoticed and unremarked in the crowd, now filled the whole great monastery with his name and his having died.

On the second day Hindinger's father arrived, stayed a few hours alone in the little room where his boy lay, was then invited to tea by the ephorus, and spent the night at the Stag.

Then came the burial. The coffin had been set up in the dorment, and the tailor from the Allgäu stood beside it and watched everything. He was a real tailor's figure, terribly thin and pointed, and wore a black Sunday coat with a greenish sheen and tight, shabby trousers, and in his hand an outmoded dress hat from the days of the old militia. His small, thin face looked troubled, sad, and feeble, like a penny candle in the wind, and he was in a constant state of embarrassment and deference before the ephorus and the professors.

At the last moment, before the bearers lifted the coffin, the sad little man stepped forward once more and touched the lid of the coffin with an embarrassed and timid gesture of tenderness. Then he stood there helplessly, struggling with his tears, and stood in the middle of the large, quiet room like a withered little tree in winter, so forsaken and hopeless and exposed that it was a pity to see. The pastor took him by the hand and stayed with him; then the little man put on his fantastically curved top hat and walked first behind the coffin, down the stairs, across the monastery courtyard, through the old gate, and over the white land toward the low wall of the churchyard. While the seminarians sang a hymn at the grave, most of them, to the vexation of the music teacher who was conducting, looked not at his hand beating time but at the lonely, windblown figure of the little master tailor, who stood sad and frozen in the snow and with bowed head listened to the speeches of the clergyman and the ephorus and the top boy, nodded absently to the singing pupils, and now and then fished with his left hand for the handkerchief hidden in the tail of his coat, without pulling it out, however.

“I couldn’t help imagining what it would be like if my own papa were standing there like that in his place,” Otto Hartner said afterward. And they all chimed in: “Yes, I thought exactly the same thing.”

Later the ephorus came to the Hellas room with Hindinger’s father. “Was any one of you particularly friends with the deceased?” the ephorus asked into the room. At first no one came forward, and Hindu’s father looked anxiously and wretchedly into the young faces. But then Lucius came forward, and the elder Hindinger took his hand and held it fast for a little while, but did not know what to say and soon went out again with a humble nod. Then he left, and had a whole long day of travel through the bright

winter land before he got home and could tell his wife in what kind of little place their Karl now lay.



In the monastery the spell was soon broken again. The teachers scolded again, doors were slammed again, and little thought was given to the vanished Hellene. Some had caught cold from the long standing at that sad pond and lay in the sickroom or went about in felt slippers with their throats bandaged. Hans Giebenrath had come through with throat and feet unharmed, but since the day of the accident he looked more serious and older. Something in him had become different, a youth out of a boy, and his soul had been moved, as it were, into another country, where it fluttered about anxiously and without a home and knew no resting places yet. This was due neither to the terror of death nor to grief for good Hindu, but solely to the suddenly awakened awareness of his guilt toward Heilner.

Heilner lay in the sickroom with two others, had to swallow hot tea, and had time to put in order the impressions he had received at Hindinger's death and perhaps to lay them by for later poetic use. But he seemed to care little about that; rather, he looked miserable and suffering and hardly exchanged a word with his companions in illness. The isolation forced on him since his punishment in the lockup had wounded and embittered his sensitive temperament, which needed frequent communication. The teachers supervised him strictly as a discontented and revolutionary head; the pupils avoided him; the porter treated him with mocking good nature; and his friends Shakespeare, Schiller, and Lenau showed him another world, mightier and grander than the one that surrounded him, oppressive and humiliating. His "Monk's Songs," which at first had been tuned only to a hermitlike melan-

choly note, gradually turned into a collection of bitter and spiteful verses on the monastery, the teachers, and his schoolmates. In his isolation he found a sour martyr's pleasure, felt with satisfaction that he was misunderstood, and in his mercilessly disrespectful monk's verses saw himself as a little Juvenal.

A week after the burial, when the two other boys had recovered and Heilner alone was still lying in the sickroom, Hans visited him. He said hello shyly, carried a chair over to the bed, sat down, and reached for the hand of the sick boy, who turned toward the wall with annoyance and seemed quite inaccessible. But Hans would not be turned away. He held fast the hand he had taken and forced his former friend to look at him. Heilner twisted his lips in annoyance.

"What is it you want?"

Hans did not let go of his hand.

"You have to listen to me," he said. "I was a coward that time and left you in the lurch. But you know how I am: it was my firm intention to stay at the top in the seminary and if possible to come out first outright. You called that grinding, and maybe you were right; but it just happened to be my kind of ideal, I didn't know anything better."

Heilner had closed his eyes, and Hans went on very softly: "Look, I'm sorry. I don't know if you'll ever want to be my friend again, but you have to forgive me."

Heilner said nothing and did not open his eyes. Everything good and glad in him laughed toward his friend, but he had grown used to the role of the harsh and lonely one now and kept at least the mask of it in front of his face for the time being. Hans did not let up.

"You have to, Heilner! I'd rather come out last than go on circling around you like this any longer. If you want, we'll be friends again and show the others that we don't need them."

Then Heilner returned the pressure of his hand and opened his eyes.

After a few days he too left his bed and the sickroom, and there was no small stir in the monastery over the newly baked friendship. But for the two of them there now came wonderful weeks, without any real events, but full of a strangely happy feeling of belonging together and of a wordless, secret understanding. It was something different from before. The weeks of separation had changed them both. Hans had become more tender, warmer, more enthusiastic; Heilner had taken on a more vigorous, more manly nature; and both had missed each other so much lately that their reunion seemed to them a great event and a precious gift.

In their friendship both these precocious boys, with a shyness full of presentiment, unknowingly tasted in advance something of the tender secrets of a first love. Besides, their alliance had the harsh charm of ripening manhood and, as an equally harsh spice, the feeling of defiance toward the whole body of their classmates, to whom Heilner remained disagreeable and Hans incomprehensible, and whose numerous friendships were at that time all still harmless boyish games.

The more fervently and happily Hans clung to his friendship, the more foreign school became to him. The new feeling of happiness went roaring like a young wine through his blood and his thoughts; beside it Livy, as well as Homer, lost his importance and his luster. But the teachers saw with alarm the hitherto faultless pupil Giebenrath changed into a problematic creature and fallen under the bad influence of the suspect Heilner. There is nothing teachers dread so much as the strange phenomena that appear in the nature of precocious boys at the age, dangerous enough in any case, when the fermentation of youth begins. In Heilner a certain streak of genius had always been uncanny to them anyway—between genius and the guild of teachers a deep gulf has been

fixed from of old, and whatever of that sort shows itself in schools is an abomination to the professors from the outset. For them geniuses are those bad ones who have no respect for them, who begin to smoke at fourteen, fall in love at fifteen, go to the taverns at sixteen, who read forbidden books, write impudent compositions, now and then stare at the teacher with scorn, and figure in the class register as rebels and candidates for the lockup. A schoolmaster would rather have ten notorious donkeys in his class than one genius, and looked at closely he is right, after all, for his task is not to train up extravagant minds but good Latinists, arithmeticians, and upright citizens. But who suffers more, and more grievously, from the other, the teacher from the boy or the other way around, which of the two is more the tyrant, more the tormentor, and which of the two it is that spoils and violates parts of the other's soul and life, that one cannot examine without growing bitter and thinking of one's own youth with anger and shame. But that is not our business, and we have the consolation that with those who are truly gifted the wounds almost always heal well, and that they become people who, in spite of school, create their good works and who later, when they are dead and bathed in the pleasant halo of distance, are held up by their schoolmasters to other generations as showpieces and noble examples. And so from school to school the spectacle of the struggle between law and spirit repeats itself, and again and again we see state and school breathlessly striving to strike dead and nip at the root the few deeper and more valuable minds that turn up every year. And again and again it is above all those hated by the schoolmasters, the often punished, the runaways, the ones chased out, who afterward enrich the treasure of our nation. But some—and who knows how many?—waste away in silent defiance and go under.

According to good old school principles, as soon as trouble was scented, it was not love but severity that was doubled toward the

two young oddities too. Only the ephorus, who was proud of Hans as his most industrious Hebraist, made a clumsy attempt at rescue. He had him called to his office, the beautiful, picturesque bay-windowed room of the old abbot's lodging, where according to legend Doctor Faust, whose home was nearby Knittlingen, enjoyed many a beaker of Elfinger wine. The ephorus was not a bad sort of man; he did not lack insight and practical sense; he even had a certain good-natured benevolence toward his pupils, whom he liked to address with the familiar *du*. His chief fault was a strong vanity, which often led him into boastful little feats on the lecturer's platform and which would not let him see his power and authority doubted in the slightest. He could not stand any objection or admit any mistake. So spineless or even dishonest pupils got along splendidly with him, but precisely the strong and honest ones had a hard time, since even a merely hinted contradiction made him wild and unjust. The role of the fatherly friend, with an encouraging look and a moved tone, he commanded like a virtuoso, and he played it now as well.

"Take a seat, Giebenrath," he said in a friendly way, after he had heartily shaken the hand of the boy who had come in shyly.

"I would like to talk with you a little. But may I say *du* to you?"

"Please do, sir."

"You will have felt yourself, my dear Giebenrath, that your work has fallen off somewhat lately, at least in Hebrew. Until now you were perhaps our best Hebraist; that is why I am sorry to notice a sudden decline. Perhaps you no longer take any real pleasure in Hebrew?"

"Oh yes, sir."

"Just think it over! Such things happen. Perhaps you have turned especially to another subject?"

"No, sir."

"Really not? Well, then we must look for other causes. Can you help me get on the track?"

"I don't know... I've always done my assignments..."

"Certainly, my dear boy, certainly. But *differendum est inter et inter*: there are differences and differences. You have done your assignments, of course; that was your duty, after all. But you used to accomplish more. Perhaps you were more industrious; in any case you were more interested in the work. Now I ask myself where this sudden slackening of your zeal comes from. You are not ill, are you?"

"No."

"Or do you have headaches? You certainly don't look excessively blooming."

"Yes, I have headaches sometimes."

"Is the daily work too much for you?"

"Oh no, not at all."

"Or are you doing a lot of private reading? Be honest now!"

"No, I read almost nothing, sir."

"Then I don't quite understand it, my dear young friend. Something must be wrong somewhere. Will you promise me to make a real effort?"

Hans laid his hand in the outstretched right hand of the mighty man, who looked at him with grave gentleness.

"That's good, that's right, my dear boy. Just don't let yourself grow weary, or you'll end up beneath the wheel."

He pressed Hans's hand, and Hans went to the door, breathing more freely. Then he was called back.

"One more thing, Giebenrath. You spend a lot of time with Heilner, don't you?"

"Yes, quite a lot."

"More than with others, I believe. Or not?"

"Yes, I do. He's my friend."

"How did that come about? You are really quite different natures, after all."

"I don't know, he just is my friend."

"You know that I am not especially fond of your friend. He is a discontented, restless spirit; he may be gifted, but he accomplishes nothing and has no good influence on you. I should very much like to see you keep farther away from him.—Well?"

"I can't do that, sir."

"You can't? Why not?"

"Because he's my friend, after all. I can't just leave him in the lurch."

"Hm. But you could attach yourself a little more to others, surely? You are the only one who gives himself up so to the bad influence of this Heilner, and we can already see the consequences. What is it that binds you to him in particular?"

"I don't know myself. But we're fond of each other, and it would be cowardly of me to leave him."

"I see, I see. Well, I won't force you. But I hope you will gradually get free of him. I would like that. I would like that very much."

The last words had nothing left of the earlier gentleness. Hans could go now.

From then on he toiled at his work anew. It was no longer, to be sure, the brisk progress of before, but more a laborious keeping up, so as at least not to fall too far behind. He too knew that this came partly from his friendship, but he saw in it not a loss and a hindrance but rather a treasure that outweighed everything he had neglected—a heightened, warmer life, with which his former sober existence of duty could not be compared. It was with him as with young people in love: he felt himself capable of great heroic deeds, but not of the daily, boring, and petty work. And so again and again, with a desperate sigh, he harnessed himself to the yoke. He did not know how to do as Heilner did, who worked superfi-

cially and took in the bare necessities quickly, in an almost violent hurry. Since his friend claimed him pretty much every evening in the free hours, he forced himself to get up an hour earlier in the mornings and wrestled especially with the Hebrew grammar as with an enemy. Really he took pleasure now only in Homer and in the history lesson. With a dimly groping feeling he came closer to an understanding of the Homeric world; and in history the heroes gradually stopped being names and numbers and looked out of near, glowing eyes and had living red lips and each his own face and hands—one red, thick, coarse hands, one quiet, cool, stony ones, and another narrow, hot, finely veined ones.

In reading the Gospels in the Greek text, too, he sometimes found himself surprised, even overwhelmed, by the clarity and nearness of the figures. Especially once, at the sixth chapter of Mark, where Jesus leaves the ship with his disciples and it says: *euthus epignontes auton periedramon*, “they knew him at once and ran to him.” Then he too saw the Son of Man leave the ship and knew him at once, neither by his figure nor by his face, but by the great, radiant depth of his loving eyes and by a gently beckoning, or rather inviting, welcoming gesture of his slender, beautiful, brownish hand, which seemed to be formed and inhabited by a fine and yet strong soul. The edge of a stirred-up stretch of water and the prow of a heavy boat appeared with it for a moment; then the whole picture was gone like a smoking breath in winter.

Now and then something of this kind came again, so that some figure or piece of history broke forth out of the books, greedily as it were, longing to live once more and to mirror its gaze in a living eye. Hans accepted it, wondered at it, and with these swift appearances, always already in flight again, felt himself deeply and strangely transformed, as though he had looked through the black earth as through glass, or as though God had looked at him. These precious moments came unbidden and vanished unlamented, like

pilgrims and friendly guests whom one does not dare to speak to and press to stay, because they have something strange and divine about them.

He kept these experiences to himself and said nothing about them even to Heilner. In Heilner the earlier melancholy had changed into a restless, sharp spirit, which criticized the monastery, teachers and classmates, the weather, human life, and the existence of God, and now and then led to quarrelsomeness or sudden stupid pranks too. Since he stood apart once and for all and in opposition to the rest, in thoughtless pride he tried to sharpen this opposition completely into a defiant and hostile relationship, into which Giebenrath, without wanting to prevent it, was drawn along, so that the two friends lay cut off from the crowd like a conspicuous island regarded with ill will. Little by little Hans felt less uncomfortable about this. If only it had not been for the ephorus, of whom he felt a dark fear. Hans had once been his favorite pupil; now the ephorus treated him coolly and neglected him with obvious intent. And precisely in Hebrew, the ephorus's special subject, he had gradually lost all desire.

It was amusing to see how much the forty seminarians had changed in body and soul in only a few months, apart from a few who stood still. Many had shot up mightily in length, very much at the expense of breadth, and hopefully stretched their wrists and ankles out of clothes that had not grown with them. The faces showed every shade between dying childishness and a manhood timidly beginning to give itself airs, and anyone whose body was still free of the angular forms of the years of growth had at least been given a provisional manly seriousness on his smooth forehead by the study of the books of Moses. Chubby cheeks had become positive rarities.

Hans too had changed. In height and thinness he was now Heilner's equal; indeed, he now looked almost older than the other.

The edges of his forehead, which had formerly shown delicately through, had worked themselves out, and his eyes lay deeper; his face had an unhealthy color; his limbs and shoulders were bony and gaunt.

The less satisfied he himself was with his work at school, the more harshly he shut himself off from his classmates under Heilner's influence. Since he no longer had any reason to look down on them as a model pupil and future top boy, arrogance suited him very badly. But that they let him notice it, and that he felt it painfully in himself, he did not forgive them. With the faultless Hartner especially, and with that forward Otto Wenger, there were quarrels several times. When the latter mocked and provoked him again one day, Hans forgot himself and answered with a blow of his fist. There was a nasty fight. Wenger was a coward, but it was easy to deal with his frail opponent, and he hit him without mercy. Heilner was not present; the others looked on idly and did not grudge Hans the thrashing. He was thoroughly beaten black and blue, bled from the nose, and all his ribs hurt. All night shame, pain, and anger kept him awake. He kept the experience from his friend, but from now on he shut himself off strictly and hardly exchanged another word with his roommates.

Toward spring, under the influence of rainy noons, rainy Sundays, and long twilights, new formations and movements appeared in the life of the monastery. The Acropolis room, whose inhabitants included a good pianist and two flute players, founded two regular music evenings; in the Germania room a society for reading plays was opened; and a few young Pietists established a Bible circle that every evening read a chapter of the Bible along with the notes of the Calw Bible.

Heilner applied for membership in the reading society of the Germania room and was not accepted. He boiled with rage. For revenge he now went to the Bible circle. They did not want him

there either, but he pushed his way in and brought strife and quarreling into the devout conversations of the modest little brotherhood with his bold speeches and godless allusions. Soon he tired of this sport too, but kept up an ironic biblical tone in his speech for some time longer. This time, however, he was hardly paid attention, since the class was now entirely possessed by a spirit of enterprise and founding.

The one who made the most talk about himself was a gifted and witty Spartan. Next to personal fame, his only concern was to bring some life into the den and to procure himself frequent relief from the monotonous working life by all sorts of witty pranks. His nickname was Dunstan, and he found an original way to make a sensation and to swing himself up to a certain fame.

One morning, when the pupils came out of the dormitories, they found a paper pasted on the washroom door on which, under the title "Six Epigrams from Sparta," a select number of the more conspicuous classmates, their follies, pranks, and friendships, were wittily mocked in distichs. The pair Giebenrath and Heilner too had received their blow. An enormous excitement arose in the little commonwealth; they crowded before that door as at the entrance of a theater, and the whole swarm buzzed, pushed, and hummed about like a hive of bees whose queen is getting ready to fly.

By the next morning the whole door was studded with epigrams and satirical couplets, with replies, assents, new attacks, without the author of the scandal, however, being so unwise as to take part in it again. He had achieved his purpose of throwing the tinder into the barn, and he rubbed his hands. For a few days almost all the pupils now took part in the war of couplets; everyone went about pensively, intent on a distich; and perhaps Lucius was the only one who went about his work unconcerned, as usual.

In the end a teacher took notice of it and forbade the continuation of the exciting game.

The sly Dunstan did not rest on his laurels, but had meanwhile prepared his main stroke. He now brought out the first number of a newspaper, hectographed on scrap paper in a tiny format, for which he had been collecting material for weeks. It bore the title *The Porcupine* and was chiefly a comic paper. A jolly conversation between the author of the Book of Joshua and a Maulbronn seminarian was the showpiece of the first number. The paper was handed out free, two copies to each room, and was to appear in future twice a week and cost five pfennigs. The proceeds were intended for an entertainment fund.

The success was resounding, and Dunstan, who now took on the air and manners of a very busy editor and publisher, enjoyed in the monastery roughly the same ticklish reputation as the notorious satirist Aretino did in his day in the Republic of Venice.

It caused general astonishment when Hermann Heilner took a passionate part in the editing and now, together with Dunstan, exercised a sharp satirical censorship, for which he lacked neither wit nor venom. For some four weeks the little paper kept the whole monastery breathless.

Giebenrath let his friend have his way; he himself had neither the desire nor the gift to join in. At first he hardly even noticed that Heilner lately spent his evenings so often in Sparta, for other things had been occupying him for a short while. By day he went about sluggish and inattentive, worked slowly and without desire, and once something strange happened to him in the Livy lesson.

The professor called on him to translate. He stayed sitting.

"What is the meaning of this? Why don't you stand up?" the professor cried angrily.

Hans did not stir. He sat upright on the bench, his head bowed a little and his eyes half closed. Being called on had half roused

him from a dream, but he heard the teacher's voice only as if from a great distance. He also felt his neighbor on the bench nudging him violently. It was no concern of his. He was surrounded by other people; other hands touched him and other voices spoke to him, near, soft, deep voices that spoke no words but only murmured deeply and gently like the sound of a fountain. And many eyes looked at him—strange, foreboding, large, radiant eyes. Perhaps the eyes of a Roman crowd, of which he had just been reading in Livy, perhaps the eyes of unknown people he had dreamed of or had seen at some time in pictures.

“Giebenrath!” the professor shouted. “Are you asleep?”

The pupil slowly opened his eyes, fixed them in astonishment on the teacher, and shook his head.

“You were asleep! Or can you tell me what sentence we are at? Well?”

Hans pointed with his finger into the book; he knew well where they were.

“Would you perhaps care to stand up now as well?” the professor asked scornfully. And Hans stood up.

“What are you up to? Look at me!”

He looked at the professor. But the professor did not like the look, for he shook his head in wonder.

“Are you unwell, Giebenrath?”

“No, Professor.”

“Sit down again and come to my room after the lesson.”

Hans sat down and bent over his Livy. He was wide awake and understood everything, but at the same time his inner eye followed the many strange figures, who slowly withdrew into great distances and kept their radiant eyes turned on him all the while, until far in the distance they sank into a mist. At the same time the teacher's voice and that of the pupil translating and all the small noises of the classroom came nearer and nearer and were at last

as real and present again as usual. Benches, lectern, and black-board stood there as always; on the wall hung the big wooden compass and the T square; all around sat his classmates, and many of them were peering over at him curiously and insolently. Then Hans was violently startled.

"Come to my room after the lesson," he had heard him say. Good God, what had happened?

At the end of the hour the professor beckoned him over and took him along through the gaping classmates.

"Now tell me what was really the matter with you. You were not asleep, then?"

"No."

"Why didn't you stand up when I called on you?"

"I don't know."

"Or didn't you hear me? Are you hard of hearing?"

"No. I heard you."

"And didn't stand up? Afterward you had such strange eyes, too. What were you thinking of?"

"Of nothing. I was going to stand up."

"Why didn't you do it? So you were unwell after all?"

"I don't think so. I don't know what it was."

"Did you have a headache?"

"No."

"Very well. Go."

Before the noon meal he was called out again and taken to the dormitory. There the ephorus was waiting for him with the district physician. He was examined and questioned, but nothing clear came to light. The doctor laughed good-naturedly and took the matter lightly.

"Those are little nervous troubles, sir," he chuckled softly. "A passing state of weakness—a kind of slight dizziness. We must see

to it that the young man gets out into the air every day. For the headaches I can prescribe him a few drops.”

From then on Hans had to go outdoors for an hour every day after the noon meal. He had no objection to that. What was worse was that the ephorus expressly forbade him Heilner’s company on these walks. Heilner raged and cursed, but had to give in. So Hans always went alone and found a certain pleasure in it. It was the beginning of spring. Over the round, beautifully arched hills the budding green ran like a thin, bright wave; the trees laid aside their winter shape, the brown network with its sharp outlines, and lost themselves with the play of young leaves in one another and in the colors of the landscape, as one boundless, flowing wave of living green.

Before, in his years at the Latin school, Hans had looked at the spring differently from this time, more keenly and curiously and more in detail. He had watched the returning birds, one kind after another, and the order in which the trees blossomed, and then, as soon as it was May, he had begun to fish. Now he took no trouble to distinguish the kinds of birds or to recognize the bushes by their buds. He saw only the general stirring, the colors sprouting everywhere, breathed the smell of the young leaves, felt the softer and fermenting air, and walked through the fields in wonder. He tired soon, always had an inclination to lie down and fall asleep, and almost constantly saw all sorts of things other than those that really surrounded him. What sort of things they really were he did not know himself, and he did not think about it. They were bright, delicate, unusual dreams, which stood around him like portraits or like avenues of strange trees, without anything happening in them. Pure pictures, only to be looked at, but looking at them was an experience too, after all. It was a being carried away into other regions and to other people. It was a walking on foreign ground, on a soft soil pleasant to tread, and it was a breathing of foreign

air, an air full of lightness and of a fine, dreamy spice. In place of these pictures there came at times a feeling, too, dark, warm, and exciting, as though a light hand glided over his body with a soft touch.

In reading and working Hans had great trouble paying attention. What did not interest him slipped away from under his hands like a shadow, and if he wanted to know the Hebrew vocabulary in the lesson, he had to learn it in the last half hour before. But often there came those moments of bodily vision when, as he read, he suddenly saw everything described standing there, living and moving, far more bodily and real than his immediate surroundings. And while he noticed with despair that his memory would no longer take anything in and grew lamer and more uncertain almost daily, older memories sometimes assailed him with an uncanny clarity that seemed strange and frightening to him. In the middle of a lesson or while reading, his father or old Anna or one of his former teachers or schoolmates would sometimes come into his mind, stand visibly before him, and hold his whole attention captive for a while. He also lived through scenes from his stay in Stuttgart, from the state examination, and from the holidays again and again, or he saw himself sitting by the river with his rod, smelled the haze of the sunny water, and at the same time it seemed to him as though the time he was dreaming of lay whole long years behind him.

On a mild, damp, dark evening he strolled up and down the dorment with Heilner and told him about home, about Papa, about fishing, and about school. His friend was strikingly quiet; he let him talk, nodded now and then, or made a few thoughtful slashes in the air with his little ruler, which he had to play with the live-long day. Gradually Hans too fell silent; night had come, and they sat down on the sill of a window.

"Say, Hans?" Heilner finally began. His voice was unsteady and excited.

"What?"

"Oh, nothing."

"No, go on, say it!"

"I only thought—because you told me all sorts of things—"

"What, then?"

"Tell me, Hans, have you really never run after a girl?"

A silence fell. They had never yet talked about that. Hans was afraid of it, and yet this mysterious territory drew him like an enchanted garden. He felt himself turn red, and his fingers trembled.

"Only once," he said in a whisper. "I was still a stupid kid."

Silence again.

"—And you, Heilner?"

Heilner sighed.

"Oh, never mind!—You know, a person shouldn't talk about it at all; there's no point."

"Yes there is, yes there is."

"—I have a sweetheart."

"You? Is it true?"

"At home. The neighbors' girl. And this winter I gave her a kiss."

"A kiss—?"

"Yes.—You know, it was already dark. In the evening, on the ice, and I was allowed to help her take off her skates. Then I gave her a kiss."

"Didn't she say anything?"

"Say anything, no. She just ran away."

"And then?"

"And then!—Nothing."

He sighed again, and Hans looked at him like a hero coming out of forbidden gardens.

Then the bell rang; they had to go to bed. There Hans lay, after the lantern had been put out and everything had grown still, awake for more than an hour longer, thinking of the kiss Heilner had given his sweetheart.

The next day he wanted to ask more, but was ashamed, and the other, since Hans did not ask him, shied from starting on it again of his own accord.

At school things went worse and worse for Hans. The teachers began to make angry faces and shoot strange glances; the ephorus was gloomy and annoyed; and his schoolmates too had long since noticed that Giebenrath was sinking from his height and had stopped aiming at first place. Only Heilner noticed nothing, since school itself was not especially important to him, and Hans himself watched everything happen and change without paying attention to it.

Heilner had meanwhile grown tired of editing the paper and returned wholly to his friend. In defiance of the prohibition he went along with Hans several times on his daily walk, lay in the sun with him and dreamed, read poems aloud, or made jokes about the ephorus. Hans hoped from day to day that he would go on with the revelations of his love adventures, but the longer it went on, the less he could bring himself to ask about them. With their classmates they were both as unpopular as ever, for Heilner had won no one's trust with his malicious jokes in *The Porcupine*.

The paper folded at this time in any case; it had outlived itself and had been meant only for the boring weeks between winter and spring. Now the beginning of the fine season offered entertainment enough with botanizing, walks, and games outdoors. Every noon gymnasts, wrestlers, runners, and ball players filled the monastery forecourt with shouting and life.

To this was now added a new great sensation, whose author and center was once again the universal stumbling block,

Hermann Heilner.

The ephorus had learned from loving schoolmates that Heilner was making fun of his prohibition and went along with Giebenrath on his walk almost every day. This time he left Hans in peace and summoned only the chief sinner, his old enemy, to his office. He addressed him as *du*, which Heilner at once forbade him. He reproached him with his disobedience. Heilner declared that he was Giebenrath's friend and that no one had the right to forbid them to associate with each other. There was an ugly scene, whose result was that Heilner got a few hours' detention, together with the strict prohibition against going out with Giebenrath in the near future.

So the next day Hans took his official walk alone again. He came back at two o'clock and joined the others in the classroom. At the beginning of the lesson it turned out that Heilner was missing. Everything was exactly as it had been that time when Hindu disappeared, only this time no one thought of lateness. At three o'clock the whole class, along with three teachers, went out on a search for the missing boy. They spread out, ran and shouted through the woods, and some, two of the teachers among them, did not think it impossible that he had done himself harm.

At five o'clock telegrams were sent to all the police stations in the region, and in the evening an express letter was sent off to Heilner's father. By late evening no trace of any kind had been found yet, and until far into the night there was whispering and murmuring in all the dormitories. Among the pupils the assumption that he had jumped into the water found the most belief. Others thought he had simply gone home. But it had been established that the runaway could have had almost no money on him.

Hans was looked at as if he must know about the matter. But that was not so; rather, he was the most frightened and troubled of them all, and at night in the dormitory, when he heard the oth-

ers asking, guessing, inventing, and joking, he crept deep under his blanket and lay for long, bad hours in grief and fear for his friend. A foreboding that he would not come back seized his anxious heart and filled him with a fearful sense of woe, until he fell asleep weary and troubled.

At the same hours Heilner lay a few miles away in a copse. He was freezing and could not sleep, but he breathed deeply in a profound feeling of freedom and stretched his limbs as if he had escaped from a narrow cage. He had been walking since noon, had bought bread in Knittlingen, and now took a bite of it now and then while he gazed through the branches, still bare and bright with spring, at the blackness of the night, the stars, and the swiftly sailing clouds. Where he would end up in the end did not matter to him; at least he had now escaped the hated monastery and shown the ephorus that his will was stronger than orders and prohibitions.

The whole of the following day they looked for him in vain. He spent the second night near a village among bundles of straw in the fields; in the morning he struck into the woods again, and only toward evening, when he meant to go into a village again, did he fall into the hands of a rural policeman. The policeman received him with friendly mockery and brought him to the town hall, where by wit and flattery he won the heart of the mayor, who took him home with him for the night and fed him plentifully with ham and eggs before bedtime. The next day his father, who had meanwhile arrived, fetched him.

The excitement in the monastery was great when the runaway was brought in. But he carried his head high and seemed not to regret his little trip of genius at all. He was required to beg pardon, but he refused and faced the secret tribunal of the teachers' council by no means timidly or respectfully. They had wanted to keep him, but now the measure was full. He was dismissed in disgrace

and left in the evening with his father, never to return. From his friend Giebenrath he had been able to take leave only with a handshake.

Fine and stirring was the great speech the ephorus gave on this extraordinary case of insubordination and degeneracy. His report to the higher authorities in Stuttgart sounded much tamer, more matter-of-fact, and feebler. The seminarians were forbidden to correspond with the departed monster, at which Hans Giebenrath, to be sure, only smiled. For weeks nothing was talked about so much as Heilner and his flight. Distance and the passing of time changed the general judgment, and some later looked after the fugitive, so anxiously avoided in his day, as after an eagle that had flown away.

The Hellas room now showed two empty desks, and the one lost last was not forgotten as quickly as the one before. Only the ephorus would have preferred to know that the second too was quiet and provided for. But Heilner did nothing to disturb the peace of the monastery. His friend waited and waited, but no letter ever came from him. He was gone and vanished; his figure and his flight gradually became history and at last legend. Later, after many further strokes of genius and many errors, the sorrow of life took the passionate boy under a strict discipline, and if not a hero, he has at any rate become an upright and stalwart man.

On Hans, who stayed behind, rested the suspicion of having known about Heilner's flight, and it robbed him completely of the teachers' goodwill. One of them said to him, when he failed to answer several questions in the lesson, "Why didn't you go along with your fine friend Heilner?"

The ephorus ignored him, and looked at him sidelong with contemptuous pity, as the Pharisee looked at the publican. This Giebenrath no longer counted; he belonged among the lepers.

Chapter Five

Like a hamster with its hoarded stores, Hans kept himself alive for a while longer on the learning he had acquired earlier. Then began a painful starving, interrupted by short and feeble new attempts whose hopelessness almost made him laugh at himself. He now gave up tormenting himself uselessly, threw Homer after the Pentateuch and algebra after Xenophon, and watched without agitation as his good reputation with the teachers sank step by step, from good to fair, from fair to mediocre, and finally to zero. When he did not have a headache, which was now the rule again, he thought of Hermann Heilner, dreamed his light, wide-eyed dreams, and drowsed for hours in half thoughts. To the mounting reproaches of all the teachers he lately answered with a good-natured, meek smile. Wiedrich the tutor, a friendly young teacher, was the only one whom this helpless smile hurt and who treated the boy who had gone off the track with a compassionate forbearance. The other teachers were indignant at him, punished him by contemptuously ignoring him, or tried now and then to wake his sleeping ambition by ironic tickling.

“In case you should happen not to be asleep, may I perhaps request you to read this sentence?”

The ephorus was nobly indignant. The vain man thought a great deal of the power of his gaze and was beside himself when Giebenrath met his majestically threatening rolling of the eyes again and again with his meekly submissive smile, which was gradually getting on his nerves.

“Don’t smile so abysmally stupidly; you would have more reason to howl.”

A letter from his father made more of an impression, imploring him in horror to mend his ways. The ephorus had written to Father Giebenrath, and the latter had been terribly frightened. His letter to Hans was a collection of all the encouraging and morally indignant phrases at the worthy man’s command, and yet, without his meaning it to, it let a tearful pitifulness show through, which hurt his son.

All these guides of youth so zealous in their duty, from the ephorus down to Papa Giebenrath, professors and tutors, saw in Hans a bad element, an obstacle to their wishes, something obstinate and sluggish that had to be compelled and brought back by force to the good path. None of them, except perhaps that compassionate tutor, saw behind the helpless smile of the narrow boyish face a sinking soul suffering and, as it drowned, looking about it in fear and despair. And it occurred to none of them that the school and the barbarous ambition of a father and a few teachers had brought this frail, fine creature to this pass by raging recklessly in the soul of the delicate child, spread out before them in innocence. Why had he had to work every day until late into the night in the most sensitive and dangerous years of boyhood? Why had they taken his rabbits away from him, deliberately estranged him from his schoolmates in the Latin school, forbidden him fishing and roaming, and inoculated him with the hollow, vulgar ideal of a shabby, wearing ambition? Why had they not granted him his well-earned holidays even after the examination?

Now the overdriven little horse lay by the roadside and was no use anymore.

Toward the beginning of summer the district physician declared once more that it was only a matter of a nervous state of weakness, coming mainly from growing. Hans should let himself

be thoroughly nursed back to health in the holidays, eat enough, and go walking a lot in the woods, and then it would surely improve.

Unfortunately it did not come to that at all. It was still three weeks before the holidays when Hans was violently scolded by the professor in an afternoon lesson. While the teacher was still going on scolding, Hans sank back on the bench, began to tremble fearfully, and broke into a long fit of weeping that interrupted the whole lesson. After that he lay in bed for half a day.



The day after, in the mathematics lesson, he was told to draw a geometrical figure on the blackboard and give the proof of it. He stepped out, but in front of the board he grew dizzy; he moved the chalk and ruler senselessly about the surface, dropped them both, and when he bent down for them, he himself stayed kneeling on the floor and could not get up again.

The district physician was rather annoyed that his patient was allowing himself such tricks. He expressed himself cautiously, ordered immediate sick leave, and recommended calling in a specialist for nervous diseases.

“He’ll get Saint Vitus’ dance yet,” he whispered to the ephorus, who nodded his head and found it advisable to change the ungraciously annoyed expression of his face into one of fatherly regret, which came easily to him and suited him well.

He and the doctor each wrote a letter to Hans’s father, put them in the boy’s pocket, and sent him home. The ephorus’s annoyance had turned into grave concern—what would the school authorities, just now disturbed by the Heilner case, think of this new misfortune? To everyone’s astonishment he even refrained from giving a speech befitting the occasion, and in the last hours

he was uncannily affable toward Hans. That Hans would not return from his sick leave was clear to him—even in the event of recovery, the pupil, already far behind, could not possibly have made up the months, or even only the weeks, he had missed. He did take leave of him with an encouragingly hearty “until we meet again,” but every time in the weeks that followed that he entered the Hellas room and saw the three empty desks, he felt uncomfortable and had trouble fighting down the thought that perhaps, after all, a part of the blame for the disappearance of two gifted pupils might fall on him. As a brave and morally strong man, however, he succeeded in banishing these useless and gloomy doubts from his soul.

Behind the seminarian traveling away with his little bag the monastery sank away with its churches, gate, gables, and towers; the woods and the ranges of hills sank away; in their place appeared the fertile orchard meadows of the Baden borderland; then came Pforzheim, and right behind it began the bluish-black fir-covered mountains of the Black Forest, cut through by numerous brook valleys and, in the hot summer glow, even bluer, cooler, and more full of the promise of shade than usual. The boy looked at the changing landscape, which grew more and more like home, not without pleasure, until, already near his home town, his father came into his mind and a painful fear of his reception thoroughly spoiled the little pleasure of the journey for him. The trip to the examination in Stuttgart and the journey to enter Maulbronn came back to him with their suspense and anxious joy. What had all that been for now? He knew as well as the ephorus that he would not come back, and that it was all over now with the seminary and studying and all ambitious hopes. But this did not make him sad now; only fear of his disappointed father, whose hopes he had betrayed, weighed on his heart. He had no other desire now than to rest, to sleep his fill, to cry his fill, to dream his fill, and

after all the torment to be left in peace for once. And he feared that he would not find that at home with his father. At the end of the train ride he got a violent headache and no longer looked out of the window, although the train was now going through his favorite country, whose heights and forests he had once roamed with passion; and in spite of his fear he almost missed getting off at the familiar station at home.

Now he stood there with umbrella and bag and was looked at by Papa. The ephorus's last report had turned the father's disappointment and indignation over his son, who was going to the bad, into a bewildered terror. He had imagined Hans wasted and looking terrible, and now found him thin and frail, to be sure, but still whole and walking on his own legs. That comforted him a little; but the worst was his hidden fear, his horror of the nervous illness the doctor and the ephorus had written about. No one in his family had ever had nervous troubles up to now; people had always spoken of such sick people with uncomprehending mockery or with a contemptuous pity, as of inmates of a madhouse, and now his Hans was coming home to him with such stories.

On the first day the boy was glad not to be received with reproaches. Then he noticed the shy, anxious forbearance with which his father treated him and to which he visibly had to force himself. Now and then he also noticed that his father looked at him with strangely searching glances, with an uncanny curiosity, spoke to him in a muffled and false tone, and watched him without his being supposed to notice it. He grew only shyer, and a vague fear of his own condition began to torment him.

In good weather he lay out in the woods for hours, and it did him good. A faint reflection of his former boyish bliss sometimes passed over his damaged soul there: joy in flowers or beetles, in listening to the birds or following the track of an animal. But these were always only moments. Mostly he lay idly in the moss, had a

heavy head, and tried in vain to think of something, until the dreams came to him again and took him far away into other spaces. He had a headache almost constantly, and when he thought back to the monastery or to the Latin school, the image of the many books and subjects and duties fell upon him like a grim nightmare, and in his aching skull Livy and Caesar, Xenophon and arithmetic problems performed confused, painful dances.

Once he had the following dream. He saw his friend Hermann Heilner lying dead on a stretcher and wanted to go to him, but the ephorus and the teachers pushed him back and dealt him painful blows at every new attempt to get through. Not only the seminary professors and tutors were there, but also the rector and the examiners from Stuttgart, all with embittered faces. Suddenly everything was different: on the stretcher lay the drowned Hindu, and his comical father with the tall top hat stood beside it, bow-legged and woeful.

And another dream: he was running in the woods in search of the runaway Heilner, and he saw him again and again walking in the distance between the trunks, and saw him over and over again disappear just when he wanted to call to him. At last Heilner stopped, let him come up, and said, "Listen, I have a sweetheart." Then he laughed excessively loud and disappeared into the bushes.

He saw a beautiful, lean man stepping out of a ship, with quiet, divine eyes and beautiful, peaceful hands, and he ran toward him. Everything melted away again, and he tried to remember what it was, until the passage in the Gospel came back to him where it said: *euthus epignontes auton periedramon*. And now he had to remember what form of conjugation *periedramon* was and what the present, infinitive, perfect, and future of the verb were; he had to conjugate it all the way through in the singular, dual, and plural, and fell into fear and sweat as soon as he stuck. When he then

came to himself, he had a feeling as though his head were sore inside everywhere, and when his face twisted involuntarily into that sleepy smile of resignation and consciousness of guilt, he at once heard the ephorus: "What is the meaning of that stupid smile? You are the last one who has any business smiling!"

On the whole, in spite of a few better days, no progress would show in Hans's condition; it seemed rather to go backward. The family doctor, who had treated his mother in her day and pronounced her dead, and who sometimes visited his father, who suffered a little from gout, made a long face and hesitated from day to day to give his opinion.

Only in those weeks did Hans notice that in the last two years of the Latin school he had had no friends anymore. His schoolmates of that time were partly gone; others he saw running about as apprentices; and nothing bound him to any of them; he had no business with any of them, and none of them cared about him. Twice the old rector spoke a few friendly words with him; the Latin teacher and the town pastor too nodded to him kindly in the street; but really Hans was no longer any concern of theirs. He was no longer a vessel into which all sorts of things could be stuffed, no longer a field for many kinds of seed; it was no longer worth spending time and care on him.

Perhaps it would have been good if the town pastor had taken him up a little. But what was he to do? What he could give, learning or at least the search for it, he had not withheld from the boy in his day, and more he simply did not have. He was not one of those pastors whose Latin one has well-founded doubts about and whose sermons are drawn from well-known sources, but to whom one gladly goes in bad times, because they have kind eyes and friendly words for every suffering. Nor was Father Giebenrath a friend or comforter, even though he took every pains to hide the vexation of his disappointment in Hans.

So Hans felt himself forsaken and unloved, sat in the sun in the little garden or lay in the woods and gave himself up to his reveries or to tormenting thoughts. He could not help himself with reading, since his head and eyes always soon hurt when he read, and because out of every one of his books, as soon as he opened it, the ghost of his time in the monastery and of the fear he had felt there rose up at once, drove him into airless, anxious corners of dream, and held him spellbound there with a burning gaze.



In this distress and forsakenness another ghost approached the sick boy as a deceptive comforter and gradually became familiar and necessary to him. That was the thought of death. It was easy, after all, to get hold of a firearm or to fix a noose somewhere in the woods. Almost every day these notions accompanied him on his walks; he looked over particular quiet little spots and finally found a place where one could die beautifully, and which he settled on for good as the place of his death. He went back to it again and again, sat there, and found a strange pleasure in imagining that one day soon he would be found dead there. The branch for the rope was chosen and tested for its strength; no more difficulties stood in the way; gradually, too, with long pauses, a short letter to his father and a very long one to Hermann Heilner were written, which were to be found with the body.

The preparations and the feeling of certainty had a beneficial effect on his spirits. Sitting under the fateful branch, he had many hours in which the pressure lifted from him and almost a joyful feeling of well-being came over him. His father too noticed the improvement in his condition, and Hans watched with ironic pleasure as his father rejoiced in a mood whose cause was, after all, only the certainty of his early end.

Why he was not long since hanging from that beautiful branch he did not really know himself. The thought had been conceived; his death was a settled matter; meanwhile he felt well for the time being and did not disdain to relish the beautiful sunshine and the lonely dreaming in these last days, as people like to do before long journeys. He could leave any day, after all; everything was in order. It was also a special bitter delight to him to stay on a little of his own free will in the old surroundings and to look into the faces of people who had no idea of his dangerous resolutions. Whenever he met the doctor, he had to think, "Just you wait and see!"

Fate let him take pleasure in his dark intentions and watched as every day he enjoyed from the cup of death a few drops of delight and vital strength. There might be little at stake in this mutilated young creature, but it was to complete its circle first all the same and not vanish from the scene before it had tasted a little more of the bitter sweetness of life.

The inescapable tormenting notions grew rarer and gave way to a weary letting go of himself, a painlessly sluggish mood in which Hans watched the hours and days drift by without thinking, gazed indifferently into the blue, and at times seemed to be sleepwalking or childish. Once, in a sluggish twilight mood, he sat in the little garden under the fir and hummed over and over to himself, without really knowing it, an old verse that had just come into his head from the Latin school days:

Oh, I am so tired,
Oh, I am so weary,
Not a penny in my purse,
And my pocket's empty.

He hummed it to the old tune and thought nothing of it as he struck it up for the twentieth time. But his father was standing near the window, listened, and had a great fright. To his dry nature

this thoughtless, comfortably dull singsong was entirely incomprehensible, and with a sigh he interpreted it as a sign of hopeless feeble-mindedness. From then on he watched the boy still more anxiously; Hans noticed it, of course, and suffered from it; but still he did not get around to taking the rope along and making use of that strong branch.

Meanwhile the hot season had come, and a year had already passed since the state examination and the summer holidays of that time. Hans thought of it now and then, but without any particular emotion; he had become rather dull. He would gladly have begun fishing again, but he did not dare to ask his father for permission. It tormented him every time he stood by the water, and sometimes he lingered for a long time on the bank where no one saw him and followed with burning eyes the movements of the dark, silently swimming fish. Toward evening he went a stretch upstream every day to swim, and since he always had to pass the little house of Inspector Geßler on the way, he discovered by chance that Emma Geßler, whom he had worshiped three years before, was home again. Curious, he looked after her a few times, but he did not like her nearly as well as before. In those days she had been a delicately built, very dainty little girl; now she had grown, had angular movements, and wore an unchildlike, modern hairdo that disfigured her completely. The long dresses did not suit her either, and her attempts to look like a lady were decidedly unfortunate. Hans found her ridiculous, but at the same time he was sorry when he thought how strangely sweet and dark and warm he had felt in those days every time he saw her. Altogether—in those days everything had been different, after all, so much more beautiful, so much more cheerful, so much more alive! For a long time now he had known of nothing but Latin, history, Greek, examinations, seminary, and headaches. But in those days there had been books of fairy tales and books of robber stories; then he

had had a little hammer mill he made himself running in the garden, and in the evenings had listened to Liese's adventurous stories in the Naschold gateway; then for a while he had taken old Großjohann the neighbor, called Garibaldi, for a robber and murderer and had dreamed of him; and all year round he had looked forward every month to something, now to haymaking, now to cutting the clover, then again to the first fishing or crayfishing, to the hop harvest, to shaking down the plums, to potato fires, to the beginning of threshing, and in between, in addition, to every dear Sunday and holiday. Then there had still been a great many things that drew him with a mysterious magic: houses, lanes, stairs, haylofts, fountains, fences, people and animals of every kind had been dear and familiar to him or mysteriously alluring. He had helped with the hop picking and listened to the big girls singing, and had remembered verses from their songs, most of them droll enough to make you laugh, but some of them strangely plaintive too, so that something choked you in the throat as you listened.

All that had sunk away and come to an end, without his noticing it at the time. First the evenings at Liese's had stopped, then catching goldfins on Sunday mornings, then reading fairy tales, and so one thing after another, down to the hop picking and the hammer mill in the garden. Oh, where had all that gone?

And it happened that the precocious youth now, in his days of sickness, lived through an unreal second childhood. His heart, robbed of its childhood by the schoolmen, now fled back with suddenly bursting longing into those beautiful twilit years and wandered enchanted in a forest of memories whose strength and clarity were perhaps morbid. He lived through them all with no less warmth and passion than he had once lived through them in reality; his cheated and violated childhood broke open in him like a long-dammed spring.

When a tree has its top cut off, it likes to send out new shoots near its roots, and so too a soul that fell sick and was spoiled in its blossoming often returns to the springlike time of beginnings and of childhood full of presentiment, as though it could discover new hopes there and tie the broken thread of life together anew. The root shoots spring up lush and quick, but it is only a semblance of life, and a tree never grows out of them again.

So it went with Hans Giebenrath too, and that is why it is necessary to follow him a little on his dream paths in the land of childhood.

The Giebenrath house stood near the old stone bridge and formed the corner between two very different lanes. The one to which the house was reckoned and belonged was the longest, broadest, and most distinguished in the town and was called Tanners' Lane. The second climbed steeply uphill, was short, narrow, and wretched, and was called the Falcon, after an ancient inn, long since closed, whose sign had been a falcon.

In Tanners' Lane lived, house after house, nothing but good, solid old citizens, people with their own houses, their own pews in church, and their own gardens, which rose steeply up the hill behind in terraces and whose fences bordered on the railway embankment built in the year seventy, overgrown with yellow broom. In distinction only the market square could compete with Tanners' Lane, where church, district office, court, town hall, and deanery stood and in their clean dignity made a thoroughly urban and noble impression. Tanners' Lane did not have any official buildings, it is true, but it had old and new citizens' dwellings with stately front doors, pretty, old-fashioned little half-timbered houses, neat bright gables; and it gained a wealth of friendliness, comfort, and light from having only one row of houses, for on the other side of the street the river ran along at the foot of a wall fitted with timber railings.

If Tanners' Lane was long, broad, bright, roomy, and distinguished, the Falcon was the opposite. Here stood crooked, dark houses with stained and crumbling plaster, overhanging gables that recalled hats knocked in, doors and windows cracked and patched in many places, crooked chimneys, and leaky gutters. The houses robbed one another of space and light, and the lane was narrow, strangely bent, and wrapped in an eternal twilight that in rainy weather or after sunset turned into a damp, malignant darkness. In front of all the windows a mass of washing always hung on poles and lines; for small and wretched as the lane was, a great many families lived in it, not to speak of all the subtenants and lodgers who rented a bed for the night. Every corner of the crooked, aging houses was densely inhabited, and poverty, vice, and sickness had their residence there. The police and the hospital had not as much to do with the whole rest of the town as with the few houses of the Falcon. When typhoid broke out, it was there; when there was a killing for once, it was there too; and when a theft happened in the town, they looked in the Falcon first. Traveling peddlers had their lodgings there, among them the droll seller of polishing powder, Hottehotte, and the scissors grinder Adam Hittel, to whom every crime and vice was attributed.



In his first school years Hans had been a frequent guest in the Falcon. Together with a dubious band of straw-blond, ragged boys he had listened to the murder stories of the notorious Lotte Frohmüller. She was the divorced wife of a small innkeeper and had five years of prison behind her; in her day she had been a well-known beauty, had had a great number of sweethearts among the factory hands, and had given occasion to frequent scandals and knife fights. Now she lived alone and spent her evenings after the

factories closed making coffee and telling stories; while she did so her door stood wide open, and besides the women and the young workers a troop of neighbors' children always listened to her from the threshold with delight and horror. On the little black stone stove the water boiled in the kettle; a tallow candle burned beside it and, together with the little blue coal fire, lit the overcrowded, dark room with an adventurous flickering, throwing the shadows of the listeners in enormous sizes on the wall and ceiling and filling them with ghostly movement.

There the eight-year-old boy made the acquaintance of the two Finkenbein brothers and kept up a friendship with them for about a year, in defiance of a strict paternal prohibition. Their names were Dolf and Emil, and they were the craftiest street boys in town, famous for stealing fruit and small offenses in the woods, and consummate masters of countless skills and pranks. On the side they dealt in birds' eggs, lead shot, young ravens, starlings, and rabbits, set night lines where it was forbidden, and felt at home in all the gardens of the town, for no fence was so spiky and no wall so thickly studded with broken glass that they could not easily get over it.

But above all it was Hermann Rechtenheil, who lived in the Falcon, to whom Hans attached himself. He was an orphan and a sick, precocious, unusual child. Because one of his legs was much too short, he always had to walk with a stick and could not take part in the games in the lane. He was thin and had a colorless face full of suffering, with a prematurely bitter mouth and too pointed a chin. He was uncommonly skillful at all sorts of handiwork, and above all he had a tremendous passion for fishing, which he passed on to Hans. Hans did not yet have a fishing permit then, but they fished in secret all the same at hidden spots, and if hunting is a pleasure, poaching, as everyone knows, is a delight. Crooked Rechtenheil taught Hans to cut the right rods, plait horsehair, dye

lines, twist loops of thread, sharpen hooks. He also taught him to watch the weather, to observe the water and cloud it with bran, to choose the right bait and fasten it correctly; he taught him to tell the kinds of fish apart, to spy on the fish while fishing, to keep the line at the right depth. Without words, only by his example and his presence, he passed on to him the knacks and the fine feeling for the moment of striking or giving line, and that strange sensitivity of the hand without which no fine fishing is possible. The handsome rods, corks, and gut lines that could be bought in shops, and all artificial tackle, he despised and scorned with zeal, and he convinced Hans that one could not possibly fish with a line one had not made and put together oneself in every part.

With the Finkenbein brothers Hans parted in anger; quiet, lame Rechtenheil left him without any quarrel. One February day he stretched out in his poor little bed, laid his crutch over his clothes on the chair, began to run a fever, and died quickly and quietly away; the Falcon forgot him at once, and only Hans kept him in good memory for a long time.

But with him the number of remarkable inhabitants of the Falcon was far from exhausted. Who did not know Rötteler the mailman, dismissed for drunkenness, who every two weeks lay drunk in the street or made scandals at night, but otherwise was good as a child and constantly smiled full of goodwill? He let Hans take snuff from his oval box, now and then let Hans make him a present of fish, fried them in butter, and invited Hans to share the meal. He owned a stuffed buzzard with glass eyes and an old music box that played old-fashioned dance tunes in thin, fine little notes. And who did not know the ancient mechanic Porsch, who always wore cuffs, even when he went barefoot? As the son of a strict village schoolteacher of the old school, he knew half the Bible and a few earfuls of proverbs and moral maxims by heart; but neither this nor his snow-white hair prevented him from playing the lady-

killer before all the women and often getting drunk. When he had taken on a bit of a load, he liked to sit on the curbstone at the corner of the Giebenrath house, called all the passersby by name, and served them abundantly with sayings.

“Hans Giebenrath junior, my dear son, hear what I tell you! What saith Sirach? Blessed is he that giveth no evil counsel and hath no evil conscience thereof! As the green leaves on a fair tree, some fall and some grow again, so it is with men too: some die and some are born. So, now you can go home, you young sea dog.”

This old Porsch, in spite of his pious sayings, was full of dark and legendary accounts of ghosts and the like. He knew the places where they walked and always wavered between belief and unbelief in his own stories. Usually he began them in a doubting, boastful, dismissive tone, as though he were making fun of the story and of his listeners, but gradually, as he told it, he hunched himself up fearfully, lowered his voice more and more, and ended in a soft, urgent, creepy whisper.

How much that was uncanny, impenetrable, darkly alluring the poor little lane held! In it too, after his business had failed and his neglected workshop had gone completely to ruin, Brendle the locksmith had lived. He had sat at his little window for half the day and looked darkly out into the lively lane, and sometimes, when one of the ragged, unwashed children from the neighboring houses fell into his hands, he had tormented it with savage malice, pulled its ears and hair, and pinched its whole body black and blue. But one day he hung on his staircase, hanged on a piece of zinc wire, and looked so hideous that no one dared go near him, until old Porsch the mechanic cut the wire from behind with tin snips, whereupon the corpse, its tongue hanging out, fell forward and went tumbling down the stairs, right into the midst of the horrified onlookers.

Every time Hans stepped out of the bright, broad Tanners' Lane into the dark, damp Falcon, a delightfully gruesome oppression came over him with the strange stifling air, a mixture of curiosity, fear, bad conscience, and a blissful intimation of adventure. The Falcon was the only place where a fairy tale, a miracle, an unheard-of horror might still happen, where magic and ghostly doings were believable and probable, and where one could feel the same painfully delicious shudders as in reading the legends and the scandalous chapbooks from Reutlingen, which the teachers confiscated and which told of the infamous deeds and punishments of the Sonnenwirtle, of Schinderhannes, of Messerkarle, of Postmichel, and of similar dark heroes, desperate criminals, and adventurers.

But besides the Falcon there was one more place where things were different from everywhere else, where one could experience and hear things and lose oneself in dark lofts and unusual rooms. That was the big tannery nearby, the huge old house where the great hides hung in half-dark lofts, where in the cellar there were covered pits and forbidden passages, and where in the evenings Liese told all the children her beautiful fairy tales. Things went on there more quietly, kindly, and humanly than over in the Falcon, but no less mysteriously. The doings of the tanners' journeymen in the pits, in the cellar, in the bark yard, and in the drying lofts were strange and peculiar; the great yawning rooms were still and as attractive as they were uncanny; the mighty and surly master of the house was feared and shunned like an ogre; and Liese went about the remarkable house like a fairy, a protector and mother to all children, birds, cats, and little dogs, full of goodness and full of wondrously strange fairy tales and verses of songs.

In this world, long since estranged from him, the boy's thoughts and dreams now moved. Out of his great disappointment and hopelessness he fled back into the good time that was past, when

he had still been full of hopes and had seen the world standing before him like a gigantic enchanted forest that hid gruesome dangers, bewitched treasures, and emerald castles in its impenetrable depths. He had made his way a little distance into this wilderness, but he had grown tired before the wonders came, and now he stood again at the mysteriously dusky entrance, this time as one shut out, in idle curiosity.

A few times Hans went to the Falcon again. He found there the old dusk and the old bad smell, the old corners and lightless stairwells; again old men and women sat in front of the doors, and unwashed, straw-blond children ran about shouting. Porsch the mechanic had grown older still and no longer knew Hans and answered his shy greeting only with a scornful bleat. Großjohann, called Garibaldi, had died, and so had Lotte Frohmüller. Rötteler the mailman was still there. He complained that the boys had broken his music box, offered him snuff, and then tried to beg from him; finally he told about the Finkenbein brothers: one of them was in the cigar factory now and already drank like a grown man; the other had run off after a knifing at a church fair and had been missing for a year now. Everything made a pitiful and wretched impression.

And once in the evening he went over to the tannery. Something drew him through the gateway and across the damp courtyard, as though his childhood lay hidden in the big old house with all its lost joys.

Over the crooked steps and the paved front hall he came to the dark staircase, groped his way up to the loft where the hides hung stretched out, and there, with the sharp smell of leather, breathed in a whole cloud of suddenly rushing memories. He came down again and looked for the back courtyard, where the tanning pits were and the tall, narrowly roofed racks for drying the cakes of spent bark. Sure enough, Liese was sitting on the bench by the

wall with a basket of potatoes to peel in front of her and a few listening children around her.

Hans stopped in the dark doorway and listened over toward them. A great peace filled the darkening tanner's yard, and apart from the faint rushing of the river that flowed past behind the courtyard wall, one heard only Liese's knife scraping as she peeled the potatoes, and her voice telling the story. The children sat crouched quite still and hardly stirred. She was telling the story of Saint Christopher, how in the night a child's voice calls him across the river.

Hans listened for a while; then he went quietly back through the black front hall and home. He felt that he could not become a child again after all and sit with Liese in the tanner's yard in the evenings, and now he avoided the tannery as much as the Falcon.

Chapter Six

It was already well on into autumn. Out of the black fir woods the scattered leafy trees shone yellow and red like torches; the ravines already had heavy mists; and the river steamed in the cool of the mornings.

The pale former seminarian still roamed about outdoors day after day, listless and tired, and fled the little company he might have had. The doctor prescribed drops, cod-liver oil, eggs, and cold sponge baths.

It was no wonder that none of it would really help. Every healthy life must have a content and a goal, and young Giebenrath had lost these. Now his father was determined to have him either become a clerk or learn a trade. The boy was still weak, it was true, and was first to regain a little more strength, but now one could soon think of getting serious with him.

Since the first bewildering impressions had softened, and since he no longer believed even in the suicide itself, Hans had passed from the agitated and changeable states of fear into an even melancholy, into which he sank slowly and defenselessly as into soft mud.

Now he roamed about in the autumn fields and succumbed to the influence of the season. The ebbing of autumn, the quiet fall of leaves, the browning of the meadows, the thick early mist, the ripe, weary wish of all growing things to die, drove him, as they do all sick people, into heavy, hopeless moods and sad thoughts. He felt the wish to pass away with it all, to fall asleep with it, to die with it,

and suffered because his youth contradicted this and clung to life with a quiet tenacity.

He watched the trees, how they turned yellow, turned brown, turned bare, and the milk-white mist that smoked out of the woods, and the gardens, in which life went out after the last fruit picking and no one looked any longer at the asters fading in their colors, and the river, in which swimming and fishing were over, which was covered with dry leaves and on whose frosty banks only the hardy tanners still held out. For some days the river had been carrying masses of cider pulp along with it, for at the pressing places and in all the mills they were now busily making cider, and the smell of fruit juice, gently fermenting, drifted through all the lanes of the town.

In the lower mill Flaig the shoemaker too had rented a small press, and he invited Hans to the cider making.

In the forecourt of the mill stood large and small cider presses, wagons, baskets and sacks full of fruit, tubs, vats, buckets, and barrels, whole mountains of brown pulp, wooden levers, wheelbarrows, empty carts. The presses worked, crunched, squealed, groaned, bleated. Most of them were painted green, and this green, together with the brownish yellow of the pulp, the colors of the apple baskets, the light-green river, the barefoot children, and the clear autumn sun, gave everyone who saw it an inviting impression of joy, zest for life, and abundance. The crunching of the crushed apples sounded tart and appetizing; whoever came up and heard it had to take an apple in his fist quickly and bite into it. From the spouts the sweet young cider flowed in a thick stream, reddish yellow and laughing in the sun; whoever came up and looked at it had to ask for a glass and quickly taste a sample; then he stood still, his eyes grew moist, and he felt a stream of sweetness and well-being go through him. And this sweet cider filled the air far around with its glad, strong, delicious smell. This fragrance

is really the finest thing of the whole year, the essence of ripeness and harvest, and it is good to breathe it in like this before the coming winter, for with it one remembers with gratitude a great many good, wonderful things: gentle May rains, rushing summer rains, cool autumn morning dew, tender spring sunshine and glaring hot summer blaze, the white and rose-red shining blossom and the ripe, red-brown gleam of the fruit trees before the harvest, and, in between, everything beautiful and joyful that the course of a year has brought.

Those were splendid days for everyone. The rich and the show-offs, as far as they condescended to appear in person, weighed their fine, plump apples in their hands, counted their dozen sacks or more, tasted from a silver pocket cup, and let everyone hear that not a drop of water went into their cider. The poor had only a single sack of fruit, tasted from glasses or earthenware bowls, added water, and were no less proud and cheerful for it. Whoever for any reason could not make cider at all went around from press to press among his acquaintances and neighbors, had a glass poured for him everywhere and an apple put in his pocket, and proved by expert remarks that he too understood his share of the business. But the many children, poor or rich, ran about with little cups, each with a bitten apple and each with a piece of bread in hand, for there had been a baseless saying since olden times that if you ate plenty of bread at the cider making you would not get a bellyache afterward.

A hundred voices shouted all at once, not to speak of the children's racket, and all these voices were busy, excited, and cheerful.

"Come on, Hannes, over here! Over to me! Just one glass!"

"Thanks kindly, I've already got the gripes."

"What'd you pay for the hundredweight?"

"Four marks. But first-rate. Here, try it!"

Now and then a small mishap occurred. A sack of apples came open too soon and everything rolled onto the ground.

"Damnation, my apples! Help, you people!"

Everybody helped pick them up, and only a few scamps tried to enrich themselves while they were at it.

"No pocketing, you rascals! Gobble all you can hold, but no pocketing. Just you wait, you little dope, you!"

"Hey, neighbor, don't be so proud! Come try some of this!"

"Like honey! Just like honey. How much are you making?"

"Two little barrels, no more, but none of it bad."

"Good thing we don't make cider in midsummer, or we'd drink it all straight off."

This year too the few grumpy old people are there who must not be missing. They have not made cider themselves for a long time, but they know everything better and tell about the good old days when you got fruit as good as free. Everything was so much cheaper and better; nobody had ever heard of putting sugar in; and altogether the trees bore quite differently in those days.

"Then you could talk about a harvest. I had one little apple tree, and it threw down its five hundredweight all by itself."

But bad as the times have become, the grumpy old folk still help with the tasting abundantly this year too, and those who still have teeth each chew away at an apple. One of them has even forced down a couple of big pears and got the gripes miserably.

"I'm telling you," he grumbles, "in the old days I ate ten of those." And with unfeigned sighs he remembers the times when he could still gobble down ten pears before he got the gripes.



In the middle of the crowd Mr. Flaig had his press standing and let the older apprentice help him. He got his apples from Baden, and

his cider was always of the best. He was quietly content and refused no one a "little taste." Still more content were his children, who romped about all around and swam blissfully along in the swarm. But most content of all, if quietly, was his apprentice. It did him good in every bone to be able once again to stir about and work hard in the open air, for he came down from a poor farmhouse up in the forest, and the good sweet cider went down deliciously too. His healthy farm boy's face grinned like a satyr mask, and his shoemaker's hands were cleaner than they ever were on a Sunday.

When Hans Giebenrath came onto the square, he was quiet and anxious; he had not wanted to come. But at the very first press a cup was held out to him, and by Naschold's Liese at that. He tasted, and as he swallowed, there came over him with the sweet, strong taste of the cider a host of laughing memories of earlier autumns, and at the same time a timid desire to join in a little for once and be merry. Acquaintances spoke to him, glasses were offered him, and by the time he reached Flaig's press, the general merriment and the drink had already seized him and transformed him. Quite jolly, he greeted the shoemaker and made a few of the usual cider jokes. The master hid his astonishment and welcomed him cheerfully.

Half an hour had passed when a girl in a blue skirt came along, laughed at Flaig and his apprentice, and began to help.

"Oh yes," said the shoemaker, "this is my niece from Heilbronn. Of course she's used to a different kind of harvest, where there's all that wine back home."

She was perhaps eighteen or nineteen years old, lively and merry as the lowlanders are, not tall but well built and full in her figure. In her round face the dark, warmly gazing eyes and the pretty, kissable mouth were merry and clever, and all in all she looked like a healthy and cheerful girl from Heilbronn, but not at

all like a relative of the devout master shoemaker. She was thoroughly of this world, and her eyes did not look like eyes accustomed to reading in the evening and at night in the Bible and in Goßner's devotional *Treasure Chest*.

Hans suddenly looked troubled again and fervently wished that Emma would go away again soon. But she stayed and laughed and chattered and had a quick answer for every joke, and Hans was ashamed and grew quite silent. To associate with young girls to whom he had to say Sie was horrible to him in any case, and this one was so lively and so talkative and cared so little about his presence and his shyness that, awkward and a little offended, he drew in his feelers and crept into himself like a slug grazed by a cartwheel on the road. He kept quiet and tried to look like someone who is bored; but he did not succeed, and instead he made a face as if someone had just died on him.

No one had time to pay attention to it, Emma herself least of all. She had been visiting the Flaigs for two weeks, as Hans got to hear, but she already knew the whole town. She ran about among high and low, tasted the new cider, joked and laughed a little, came back again and acted as though she were busily working along, took the children up in her arms, gave away apples, and spread nothing but laughter and fun around her. She called out to every street boy, "Want an apple?" Then she took a fine, red-cheeked one, put her hands behind her back, and made them guess: "Right or left?" But the apple was never in the right hand, and only when the boys began to grumble did she give one away, but a smaller and green one. She seemed to have been told about Hans too, asked him whether he was the one who always had headaches, but before he could answer she was already caught up in another conversation with neighbors.

Hans already had a mind to slip away and go home when Flaig put the lever into his hand.

"There, now you can carry on a little; Emma will help you. I have to go to the workshop."

The master went, the apprentice was told to carry the cider away with the master's wife, and Hans was alone at the press with Emma. He clenched his teeth and worked with grim hostility.

Then he could not help wondering why the lever went so hard, and when he looked up, the girl broke into a bright laugh. She had braced herself against it for fun, and when Hans now pulled again furiously, she did it once more.

He did not say a word. But as he pushed the lever, which the girl's body resisted on the other side, he suddenly felt bashful and oppressed, and gradually he stopped turning altogether. A sweet fear came over him, and when the young thing laughed boldly into his face, she suddenly seemed changed to him, friendlier and yet more strange, and now he too laughed a little, awkwardly confiding.

And then the lever came to a complete stop.

And Emma said, "Let's not wear ourselves out like this," and handed him the half-full glass she had just been drinking from herself.

This swallow of cider seemed to him very strong and sweeter than the one before, and when he had drunk it, he looked longingly into the empty glass and wondered how violently his heart was beating and how hard it was for him to breathe.

After that they worked again a little, and Hans did not know what he was doing when he tried to stand so that the girl's skirt would have to brush against him and her hand touch his. But every time this happened, his heart stopped in fearful bliss, and a pleasantly sweet weakness came over him, so that his knees trembled a little and a dizzy roaring sounded in his head.

What he said he did not know, but he answered her back, laughed when she laughed, shook his finger at her a few times

when she did something silly, and twice more drank a glass empty from her hand. At the same time a whole army of memories raced past him: servant girls he had seen standing in doorways with men in the evening, a few sentences from storybooks, the kiss Hermann Heilner had given him that time, and a host of words, stories, and dark schoolboy conversations about “the girls” and “what it’s like when you have a sweetheart.” And he breathed as hard as a horse pulling uphill.

Everything was transformed. The people and the bustle all around had dissolved into a colorful, laughing cloud of being. The separate voices, curses, and laughter went under in a general dull roar; the river and the old bridge looked far away and as if painted.

Emma too looked different. He no longer saw her face—only the dark, glad eyes and a red mouth with white pointed teeth behind it; her figure dissolved, and he saw only single parts of it—now a low shoe with a black stocking above it, now a stray little dangling curl on the nape of her neck, now a tanned, round throat vanishing into the blue cloth, now the firm shoulders and the breathing swell beneath them, now an ear with the red light shining through it.

And after another while she let the glass fall into the tub and bent down for it, and as she did so her knee pressed against his wrist at the edge of the tub. And he bent down too, but more slowly, and almost touched her hair with his face. Her hair had a faint fragrance, and beneath it, in the shadow of loose, crinkly little curls, the warm brown of a lovely nape gleamed and ran down into the blue bodice, whose tightly strained hooks let it show a little way farther through the gap.

When she straightened up again, and her knee slid along his arm as she did so, and her hair brushed his cheeks, and she had turned quite red from bending, a violent shudder ran through all of Hans’s limbs. He turned pale and for a moment had the feeling of a deep, deep weariness, so that he had to hold on to the screw

of the press. His heart went jerking up and down, and his arms grew weak and hurt him in the shoulders.

From then on he hardly spoke another word and avoided the girl's eyes. Instead, as soon as she looked away, he looked at her fixedly with a mixture of unknown desire and bad conscience. In that hour something tore in him, and a new, strangely alluring land with far blue coasts opened before his soul. He did not yet know, or only dimly guessed, what the anxiety and sweet torment in him meant, and did not know either which was greater in him, pain or desire.

But the desire meant the victory of his young power of love and the first intimation of mighty life, and the pain meant that the peace of morning was broken and that his soul had left the land of childhood, which one does not find again. His light little boat, barely escaped from its first shipwreck, had now come into the power of new storms and near to waiting shallows and breakneck reefs, through which even the best-guided youth has no pilot, but must find his way and his rescue by his own strength.

It was a good thing that the apprentice now came back and relieved him at the press. Hans stayed a while longer. He was still hoping for a touch or a friendly word from Emma. She was chattering around at other people's presses again. And since Hans felt embarrassed in front of the apprentice, after a quarter of an hour he slipped away home without saying goodbye.

Everything had become strangely different, beautiful and exciting. The sparrows, grown fat on the pulp, shot noisily through the sky, which had never been so high and beautiful and so longingly blue. Never had the river had so pure, green-blue, laughing a surface, nor so dazzling white and roaring a weir. Everything seemed to stand newly painted, like dainty pictures, behind clear, fresh panes of glass. Everything seemed to be waiting for the beginning of a great festival. In his own breast too he felt a constricting,

strong, anxious, and sweet surging of strangely daring feelings and unusual, glaring hopes, together with a shyly doubting fear that it was only a dream and could never come true. Swelling, these conflicting feelings became a darkly welling spring, a feeling as though something all too strong wanted to break loose in him and get air—perhaps a sob, perhaps a song, a shout, or loud laughter. Only at home did this excitement calm down a little. There, of course, everything was as always.

“Where have you been, then?” asked Mr. Giebenrath.

“At Flaig’s, at the mill.”

“How much has he pressed?”

“Two barrels, I think.”

He asked whether he might invite the Flaig children when his father came to do his cider making.

“Of course,” Papa growled. “I’ll do it next week. Just go and fetch them then!”

There was still an hour until supper. Hans went out into the garden. Apart from the two firs there was little green left. He tore off a hazel switch, let it whistle through the air, and stirred about with it in the withered leaves. The sun was already behind the mountain, whose black outline, with the tips of the firs drawn hair-fine, cut into the greenish-blue, moist, clear evening sky. A gray, long-drawn-out cloud, glowing yellow and brownish, floated slowly and comfortably up the valley through the thin, golden air like a ship coming home.

Moved in a strange way, unknown to him, by the ripe, richly colored beauty of the evening, Hans strolled through the garden. Now and then he stopped, closed his eyes, and tried to picture Emma, how she had stood across from him at the press, how she had let him drink from her cup, how she had bent over the tub and straightened up again blushing. He saw her hair, her figure in the tight blue dress, her throat and her nape shadowed brown with

dark little hairs, and everything filled him with desire and trembling; only her face he could no longer picture at all.

When the sun was down, he did not feel the coolness, and he felt the advancing dusk like a veil full of secrets for which he knew no names. For he understood, to be sure, that he had fallen in love with the girl from Heilbronn, but the working of awakening manhood in his blood he understood only dimly, as an unaccustomed, irritable, and tiring condition.

At supper it seemed strange to him to be sitting with his transformed self in the midst of the long-familiar surroundings. His father, the old maid, the table and dishes, and the whole room suddenly seemed to him to have grown old, and he looked at everything with a feeling of astonishment, strangeness, and tenderness, as if he had just come home from a long journey. That time, when he was making eyes at his deadly branch, he had looked at the same people and things with the wistfully superior feeling of one taking leave; now it was a returning, a wondering, a smiling, a possessing again.

They had eaten, and Hans was about to get up, when his father said in his curt way, "Would you like to be a mechanic, Hans, or a clerk instead?"

"What do you mean?" Hans asked back in astonishment.

"You could start with Schuler the mechanic at the end of next week, or the week after as an apprentice at the town hall. Think it over properly! We'll talk about it tomorrow."

Hans got up and went out. The sudden question had confused and dazzled him. Unexpectedly, everyday, active, brisk life stood before him, from which he had been estranged for months, and it had an alluring face and a threatening face, promised and demanded. He had no real desire to be either a mechanic or a clerk. The hard bodily work of a trade frightened him a little. Then

his school friend August came to his mind, who had become a mechanic, after all, and whom he could ask.

While he thought the matter over, his ideas grew dimmer and paler; the business did not seem so very urgent and important to him after all. Something else drove and occupied him; he paced restlessly up and down the front hall, and suddenly he took his hat, left the house, and went slowly out into the lane. It had occurred to him that he must see Emma once more today.

It was already getting dark. From a nearby tavern shouting and hoarse singing came across. Many windows were lit; here and there one was kindled and then another, and laid a faint red glow into the dark air. A long row of young girls, arm in arm, sauntered merrily down the lane with loud laughter and talk, swayed in the uncertain light, and ran like a warm wave of youth and pleasure through the drowsing lanes. Hans looked after them for a long time; his heart was beating up into his throat. Behind a curtained window someone could be heard playing the violin. At the fountain a woman was washing lettuce. On the bridge two young fellows were strolling with their sweethearts. One held his girl loosely by the hand, swung her arm, and smoked his cigar. The second couple walked on slowly, closely entwined; the fellow had his arm around the girl's hip, and she pressed her shoulder and head firmly against his chest. Hans had seen this a hundred times and paid no attention. Now it had a secret sense, an unclear but lustfully sweet meaning; his gaze rested on the couple, and his imagination pressed, foreboding, toward a near understanding. Oppressed and shaken to his depths, he felt himself near a great secret of which he did not know whether it would be delicious or terrible, but trembling, he felt something of both in advance.

In front of Flaig's little house he stopped and could not find the courage to go in. What was he to do and say inside? He could not help thinking how, as a boy of eleven and twelve, he had often

come here; then Flaig had told him Bible stories and stood up to his stormy, curious questions about hell, the devil, and spirits. These memories were uncomfortable and gave him a bad conscience. He did not know what he meant to do; he did not even know what he really wanted; but it seemed to him that he stood before something secret and forbidden. It seemed to him a wrong against the shoemaker that he was standing in the dark before his door without going in. And if the shoemaker saw him standing there, or came out of the door now, he would probably not even scold him but laugh at him, and that he dreaded most of all.

He crept around behind the house and could now see from the garden fence into the lighted living room. He did not see the master. The wife seemed to be sewing or knitting something; the oldest boy was still up and sat reading at the table. Emma went back and forth, evidently busy tidying up, so that he got to see her only for moments at a time. It was so still that one could clearly hear the most distant step in the lane and, beyond the garden, the soft flowing of the river. Darkness and the cool of the night grew quickly.

Beside the living room windows a smaller hall window lay dark. After a long while an indistinct figure appeared at this little window, leaned out, and looked into the darkness. Hans recognized by the figure that it was Emma, and his heart stood still with anxious expectation. She stayed standing in the window, looking across long and calmly, but he did not know whether she saw and recognized him. He did not move a limb and stared fixedly across at her, in uncertain trepidation both hoping and fearing that she might recognize him.

And the indistinct figure disappeared from the window again; right afterward the little garden door clicked, and Emma came out of the house. In his first fright Hans wanted to take to his heels, but stayed leaning against the fence without a will of his own and

watched the girl walk slowly toward him through the dark garden, and at each of her steps something drove him to run away, and something stronger held him back.

Now Emma stood right in front of him, not half a step away, only the low fence between them, and she looked at him attentively and strangely. For quite a while neither said a word. Then she asked softly:

“What do you want?”

“Nothing,” he said, and it went over his skin like a caress that she had said *du* to him.

She held out her hand to him over the fence. He took it shyly and tenderly and pressed it a little; then he noticed that it was not withdrawn, took courage, and stroked the warm girl's hand finely and carefully. And when it was still willingly left to him, he laid it against his cheek. A flood of piercing pleasure, of strange warmth and blissful weariness ran through his being; the air around him seemed mild and damp, as when the warm south wind blows; he no longer saw lane or garden, only a near, bright face and a tangle of dark hair.

And it seemed to him to sound from a great distance of night when the girl asked very softly:

“Do you want to give me a kiss?”

The bright face came nearer, the weight of a body bent the slats outward a little, loose, faintly fragrant hair brushed Hans's forehead, and closed eyes, covered by white, broad lids and dark lashes, were close in front of his. A violent shudder ran over his body when he touched the girl's mouth with shy lips. At once he shrank back trembling, but she had taken his head in her hands, pressed her face into his, and would not let go of his lips. He felt her mouth burning; he felt it press against him and suck greedily fast, as though it wanted to drink the life out of him. A deep weakness came over him; even before the strange lips let go of him, the

trembling pleasure turned into deathly weariness and pain, and when Emma released him he swayed and held on to the fence with convulsively clutching fingers.

“Listen, be here again tomorrow evening,” said Emma, and went quickly back into the house. She had not been gone five minutes, but to Hans it seemed that long ages had passed. He looked after her with empty eyes, still held on to the boards, and felt too tired to take a step. Dreaming, he listened to his blood, which hammered in his head, flooded from his heart and back in uneven, painful waves, and stopped his breath.



Now he saw the door open inside the room and the master, who had probably still been in the workshop, come in. A fear that he might be noticed fell upon him and drove him away. He walked slowly, reluctantly, and unsteadily like someone slightly drunk, and at every step had the feeling that he must sink to his knees. The dark lanes with sleepy gables and dim red window eyes flowed past him like pale stage sets, and bridge, river, courtyards, and gardens. The fountain in Tanners' Lane splashed strangely loud and resounding. Lost in a dream, Hans opened a gate, came through a pitch-dark passage, climbed stairs, opened and closed a door and then another, sat down on a table that stood there, and only after a long time woke to the sensation of being at home in his room. Again it was a while before he came to the decision to undress. He did it absently and stayed sitting undressed at the window until the autumn night suddenly chilled him through and drove him into the pillows.

He thought he must fall asleep at once. But hardly was he lying down and a little warm when the pounding of his heart came back, and the uneven, violent surging of his blood. As soon as he closed

his eyes, it seemed to him as if the girl's mouth still hung on his, sucked the soul out of him, and filled him with tormenting heat.

He fell asleep late and plunged in harried flight from dream to dream. He stood in an anxiously deep darkness; groping about him, he seized Emma's arm; she embraced him, and together they sank in a slow fall into a warm, deep flood. The shoemaker was suddenly standing there and asked why he no longer wanted to visit him; then Hans had to laugh and noticed that it was not Flaig but Hermann Heilner, who sat beside him in a window in the Maulbronn oratory and made jokes. But that too vanished at once, and he stood at the cider press, Emma braced herself against the lever, and he fought against it with all his strength. She leaned across and sought his mouth; it grew still and pitch-dark, and now he sank again into a warm, black depth and was lost in dizziness and mortal fear. At the same time he heard the ephorus giving a speech of which he did not know whether it was meant for him.

Then he slept until late in the morning. It was a bright, golden day. He walked up and down in the garden for a long time, trying hard to wake up and get clear, but he was surrounded by a thick, sleepy mist. He saw violet asters, the very last flowers in the garden, standing lovely and laughing in the sun as though it were still August, and saw the warm, dear light flood tenderly and coaxingly around the withered twigs and branches and bare tendrils, as though it were early spring. But he only saw it; he did not live it; it was no concern of his. Suddenly a clear, strong memory seized him from the time when his rabbits still hopped about here in the garden and his waterwheel and little hammer mill were running. He could not help thinking of a September day three years ago. It was the eve of Sedan Day, the national holiday; August had come to see him and had brought ivy, and now they were washing their flagpoles clean and fastening the ivy to the golden tips, talking about tomorrow and looking forward to tomorrow. Nothing else

was there and nothing happened, but they had both been so full of the sense of the holiday and of great joy; the flags had gleamed in the sun; Anna had baked plum cake; and at night the Sedan bonfire was to be lit on the high rock.

Hans did not know why he had to think of that evening today of all days, nor why this memory was so beautiful and powerful, nor why it made him so miserable and sad. He did not know that in the dress of this memory his childhood and boyhood rose up before him once more, merry and laughing, to take leave and to leave behind the sting of a great happiness that had been and would never come again. He felt only that this memory did not agree with his thoughts of Emma and of last evening, and that something had risen up in him that was not compatible with the happiness of that time. He thought he saw the golden tips of the flagpoles gleam again, heard his friend August laugh, and smelled the fragrance of the fresh cake, and all that was so cheerful and blissful and had moved so far away from him and become so strange that he leaned against the rough trunk of the big spruce and broke into a hopeless sobbing, which for the moment brought him comfort and granted him release.

At noon he ran over to August, who had become first apprentice now and had filled out and grown mightily. He told him what he had in mind about becoming a mechanic.

"That's a tricky business," the other said, putting on a worldly-wise face. "That's a tricky business. Because you're such a weakling, see. The first year you always have the damned hammering at the forge, and a sledgehammer like that's no soup spoon. And you have to carry the iron around and clean up in the evening, and filing takes strength too, and at the beginning, till you've got the hang of it, you get nothing but old files that don't cut anything and are smooth as a monkey's behind."

Hans at once grew dispirited.

"Well, then should I give it up?" he asked timidly.

"Good Lord, I didn't say that! Don't be such a slowpoke! Only it isn't a dance floor at the beginning. But otherwise, sure—a mechanic like that is a fine thing, you know, and a fellow has to have a good head too, or else he can become a blacksmith. Here, take a look at this!"

He brought over a few small, finely worked machine parts of bright steel and showed them to Hans.

"See, not half a millimeter can be off on those. All done by hand, except the screws. There you have to keep your eyes open! Now they get polished and hardened, and that's it."

"Yes, that's fine. If only I knew—"

August laughed.

"Scared? Well, an apprentice gets pushed around, that's just the way it is. But I'm here too, and I'll help you all right. And if you start next Friday, I'll just have finished my second year of apprenticeship and on Saturday I get my first week's wages. And on Sunday we celebrate, with beer, and cake, and everybody there, you too, then you'll see how things go with us. Yes, you'll be surprised! And anyway, we used to be such good friends before."

At dinner Hans told his father he would like to become a mechanic and asked whether he might begin in a week.

"All right," said Papa, and in the afternoon he went with Hans to Schuler's workshop and signed him up.

But when it began to grow dusky, Hans had as good as forgotten all that again and thought only that Emma would be expecting him in the evening. Even now it took his breath away; the hours seemed now too long to him and now too short, and he drifted toward the meeting like a boatman toward a rapid. There was no question of eating that evening; he could hardly get down a cup of milk. Then he went.

Everything was as it had been yesterday—dark, sleepy lanes, red windows, lamplit twilight, and slowly strolling pairs of lovers.

At the fence of the shoemaker's garden a great anxiety fell upon him; he started at every sound, and standing and listening there in the dark he felt like a thief. He had not waited a minute when Emma stood before him, ran her hands over his hair, and opened the garden gate for him. He stepped in cautiously, and she drew him along with her, quietly along the path lined with bushes, through the back door into the dark passage of the house.

There they sat down side by side on the top step of the cellar stairs, and it was quite a while before they could see each other, barely, in the blackness. The girl was in good spirits and chattered away in a whisper. She had tasted many a kiss already and knew her way around in matters of love; the shy, tender boy was just right for her. She took his narrow face between her hands and kissed his forehead, eyes, and cheeks, and when it was his mouth's turn and she kissed it again so long and sucking, the boy was seized with dizziness and lay limp and without a will of his own leaning against her. She laughed softly and tugged at his ear.

She chattered on and on, and he listened and did not know what he heard. She stroked his arm with her hand, his hair, his neck and his hands; she leaned her cheek against his and her head on his shoulder. He kept quite still and let everything happen, filled with a sweet dread and a deep, happy anxiety, now and then starting briefly and softly like someone in a fever.

"What kind of sweetheart are you!" she laughed. "Why, you don't dare anything at all."

And she took his hand, ran it over her nape and through her hair, and laid it on her breast and pressed herself against it. He felt the soft form and the sweet strange surging, closed his eyes, and felt himself sinking into endless depths.

“Don’t! No more!” he said, fending her off, when she wanted to kiss him again. She laughed.

And she drew him close to her and pressed his side against her side, wrapping her arm around him, so that in feeling her body he lost his head entirely and could not say anything more at all.

“Do you love me, then?” she asked.

He wanted to say yes, but he could only nod, and he kept on nodding for quite a while.

She took his hand once more and, joking, slipped it under her bodice. As he felt so hot and close the pulse and breath of the other life, his heartbeat stopped and he thought he must die, so hard did his breath come. He drew his hand back and groaned, “I have to go home now.”

When he tried to get up, he began to sway and very nearly fell down the cellar stairs.

“What’s the matter with you?” Emma asked in astonishment.

“I don’t know. I’m so tired.”

He did not feel that on the way to the garden fence she held him up and pressed herself against him, and did not hear her say good night and close the little door behind him. He got home through the lanes, he did not know how, as though a great storm were tearing him along or a mighty flood were carrying him, rocking.

He saw pale houses to the left and right, and above them, high up, mountain ridges, tips of firs, the blackness of night, and great, resting stars. He felt the wind blowing, heard the river streaming past the piers of the bridge, and saw in the water gardens, pale houses, the blackness of night, lanterns, and stars mirrored.

On the bridge he had to sit down; he was so tired and thought he would never get home. He sat on the parapet; he listened to the water rubbing against the piers and roaring at the weir and booming like an organ at the mill grate. His hands were cold; in his chest

and throat the blood labored, faltering and rushing headlong, darkened his eyes, and ran back in a sudden wave to his heart, leaving his head full of dizziness.

He got home, found his room, lay down, and fell asleep at once, plunging in his dreams from depth to depth through immense spaces. At midnight he woke tormented and exhausted and lay until morning between sleep and waking, filled with a parched longing, tossed back and forth by uncontrolled forces, until in the first light of early morning his whole torment and distress broke out in a long weeping, and he fell asleep once more on pillows wet with tears.

Chapter Seven

Mr. Giebenrath worked away at the cider press with dignity and noise, and Hans helped. Of the shoemaker's children two had accepted the invitation; they busied themselves with the fruit, shared a small tasting glass between them, and carried enormous pieces of black bread in their fists. But Emma had not come along.

Only when his father had gone off with the cooper for half an hour did Hans dare to ask about her.

"Where is Emma, then? Didn't she want to come?"

It was a while before the little ones had empty mouths and could talk.

"She's gone," they said, and nodded.

"Gone? Gone where?"

"Home."

"Left? On the train?"

The children nodded eagerly.

"When?"

"This morning."

The little ones reached for their apples again. Hans fiddled with the press, stared into the cider bucket, and slowly began to understand.

His father came back; they worked and laughed; the children said thank you and ran off; it grew evening, and they went home.

After supper Hans sat alone in his room. Ten o'clock came and eleven; he did not light a lamp. Then he slept deeply and long.

When he woke later than usual, he had only the vague feeling of a misfortune and a loss, until Emma came back to his mind. She

was gone, without a greeting, without a goodbye; she had no doubt already known when she would be leaving when he was with her that last evening. He remembered her laughing and her kissing and her superior manner. She had not taken him seriously at all.

With the angry pain of this, the unrest of his excited and unappeased powers of love flowed together into a dull torment that drove him from the house into the garden, onto the street, into the woods, and home again.

So he learned, perhaps much too early, his share of the secret of love, and for him it held little that was sweet and much that was bitter. Days full of fruitless laments, longing memories, cheerless brooding; nights in which pounding of the heart and oppression kept him from sleeping or plunged him into oppressively terrible dreams. Dreams in which the uncomprehended surgings of his blood became monstrous, frightening fabulous images, deadly embracing arms, hot-eyed fantasies, dizzying abysses, huge blazing eyes. Waking, he found himself alone, enfolded by the loneliness of the cool autumn nights, suffered longing for his girl, and pressed himself, groaning, into pillows wet with tears.

The Friday on which he was to start in the mechanic's workshop drew near. His father bought him a blue linen suit and a blue cap of half wool; he tried the things on and felt changed and rather ridiculous in the metalworker's uniform. When he passed the schoolhouse, the house of the rector or of the arithmetic teacher, Flaig's workshop, or the town pastor's house, he felt wretched. So much toil, diligence, and sweat, so many little pleasures given up, so much pride and ambition and hopeful dreaming, all for nothing, all only so that now, later than all his classmates and laughed at by all of them, he could go into a workshop as the lowest apprentice!

What would Heilner say to that?

Only gradually did he begin to make his peace with the blue metalworker's suit and to look forward a little to the Friday on which he was to christen it. There would at least be something to experience again, after all!

But these thoughts were not much more than quick flashes out of a dark cloud. He did not forget the girl's departure, and still less did his blood forget or get over the excitements of those days. It pressed and cried out for more, for a release of his awakened longing or for a guide through the riddles whose solution was too hard for him alone. So the time passed, dully and torturingly slow.

The autumn was more beautiful than ever, full of gentle sun, with silver early mornings, colorfully laughing noons, and clear evenings. The farther mountains took on a deep velvet blue, the chestnut trees shone golden yellow, and over walls and fences the leaves of the wild vine hung down in purple.

Hans was restlessly in flight from himself. By day he roamed about the town and the fields and avoided people, since he thought they must be able to see his love troubles in him. But in the evenings he went out into the lane, looked at every servant girl, and crept after every pair of lovers with a miserably bad conscience. With Emma, it seemed to him, everything desirable and all the magic of life had been near and had treacherously slipped away again. He no longer thought of the torment and oppression he had felt with her. If he had her again now, he believed, he would no longer be shy, but would wrest all her secrets from her and push his way deep into the enchanted garden of love whose gate had now been slammed in his face. His whole imagination had become entangled in this sultry, dangerous thicket, wandered about in it despondently, and in stubborn self-torment would know nothing of the fact that outside the narrow magic circle beautiful wide spaces lay bright and friendly.

In the end he was glad when the Friday he had at first awaited with dread was there. Early in the morning he put on his new blue work clothes, put on his cap, and went a little timidly down Tanners' Lane to Schuler's house. A few acquaintances looked after him curiously, and one of them even asked, "What's this, have you turned metalworker?"

In the workshop they were already working briskly. The master was just forging. He had a piece of red-hot iron on the anvil; a journeyman wielded the heavy sledge; the master struck the finer, shaping blows, managed the tongs, and between times beat time on the anvil with his handy forging hammer, so that it rang out bright and cheerful through the wide-open door into the morning.

At the long workbench, blackened with oil and filings, stood the older journeyman, and beside him August, each busy at his vise. On the ceiling quick belts were humming, driving the lathes, the grindstone, the bellows, and the drill press, for they worked with water power. August nodded to his friend as he came in and signaled him to wait at the door until the master had time for him.

Hans looked shyly at the forge, the idle lathes, the whirring belts and idler pulleys. When the master had finished forging his piece, he came over and held out a big, hard, warm hand to him.

"You hang your cap up there," he said, pointing to an empty nail on the wall.

"There, come along. And here's your place and your vise."

With that he led him to the hindmost vise and showed him, first of all, how he was to handle the vise and keep the workbench and the tools in order.

"Your father's already told me you're no Hercules, and anybody can see it. Well, for the time being you can stay away from the forging, till you're a little stronger."

He reached under the workbench and pulled out a small cast-iron gearwheel.

"There, you can start with this. The wheel's still raw from the foundry and has little bumps and burrs all over it; they have to be scraped off, or else the fine tools get ruined on them later."

He clamped the wheel in the vise, took an old file, and showed how it was to be done.

"There, now carry on. But don't you take any other file! You'll have enough to do on it till noon; then you show it to me. And while you're working you don't bother about anything except what you're told. An apprentice doesn't need to have thoughts."

Hans began to file.

"Stop!" cried the master. "Not like that. The left hand goes on the file like this. Or are you left-handed?"

"No."

"All right, then. It'll come."

He went off to his vise, the first one by the door, and left Hans to see how he would get on.

At the first strokes he was surprised that the stuff was so soft and came off so easily. Then he saw that this was only the brittle top crust of the casting, which flaked off loosely, and that only beneath it lay the grainy iron he was supposed to smooth. He pulled himself together and worked on eagerly. Not since his playful boyish tinkering had he tasted the pleasure of seeing something visible and usable come into being under his hands.

"Slower!" the master called over. "When you file you have to keep time—one two, one two. And press down, or the file gets ruined."

Then the eldest journeyman had something to do at the lathe, and Hans could not help peering over. A steel pin was clamped into the chuck, the belt was shifted, and the pin whirled, gleaming, turning hastily, while the journeyman took a hair-thin, shining shaving off it.

And everywhere lay tools, pieces of iron, steel, and brass, half-finished work, bright little wheels, chisels and drills, lathe tools and awls of every shape; beside the forge hung hammers and set hammers, anvil inserts, tongs, and soldering irons; along the wall rows of files and milling cutters; on the shelves lay oily rags, little brooms, emery files, hacksaws, and oil cans stood about, acid bottles, little boxes of nails and screws. Every moment the grindstone was in use.

With satisfaction Hans noticed that his hands were already quite black, and hoped that his suit too would soon look more used, for beside the black and patched overalls of the others it still looked ridiculously new and blue.

As the morning went on, life came into the workshop from outside too. Workers came from the machine knitting mill next door to have small machine parts ground or repaired. A farmer came, asked about his mangle, which was there to be mended, and cursed blasphemously when he heard it was not ready yet. Then came an elegant factory owner, with whom the master negotiated in a side room.

Beside it all and in between, men, wheels, and belts worked on evenly, and so for the first time in his life Hans heard and understood the hymn of work, which, for the beginner at least, has something moving and pleasantly intoxicating about it, and saw his small person and his small life fitted into a great rhythm.

At nine o'clock there was a quarter of an hour's break, and everyone got a piece of bread and a glass of cider. Only now did August greet the new apprentice. He talked to him encouragingly and began raving again about next Sunday, when he meant to blow his first week's wages with his mates. Hans asked what sort of wheel it was that he had to file down, and learned that it belonged to a tower clock. August was going to show him how it was to run

and work later on, but just then the first journeyman began filing again, and everyone went quickly to his place.

When it was between ten and eleven, Hans began to grow tired; his knees and his right arm hurt a little. He shifted from one foot to the other and secretly stretched his limbs, but it did not help much. Then he let go of the file for a moment and leaned on the vise. No one paid attention to him. As he stood resting like that and heard the belts singing above him, a slight numbness came over him, so that he closed his eyes for a minute. Just then the master was standing behind him.

“Well, what is it? Tired already?”

“Yes, a little,” Hans admitted.

The journeymen laughed.

“That’ll pass,” the master said calmly. “Now you can see how soldering is done. Come!”

Hans watched with curiosity how the soldering was done. First the iron was heated, then the joint was brushed with soldering fluid, and then the white metal dripped from the hot iron and hissed softly.

“Take a rag and rub the thing off well. Soldering fluid eats in; you mustn’t leave it on any metal.”

After that Hans stood at his vise again and scraped away with his file at the little wheel. His arm hurt, and his left hand, which had to press down on the file, had turned red and was beginning to ache.

At noon, when the head journeyman laid his file aside and went to wash his hands, Hans brought his work to the master. The master glanced at it.

“It’s all right, it can stay like that. Under your place in the box there’s another wheel just like it; you take that one on this afternoon.”

Now Hans too washed his hands and went off. He had an hour free for dinner.

Two shop apprentices, former schoolmates of his, walked behind him in the street and laughed at him.

“State-examination metalworker!” one of them called.

He walked faster. He did not really know whether he was satisfied or not; he had liked it in the workshop, only he had grown so tired, so terribly tired.

And in the doorway, while he was already looking forward to sitting down and eating, he suddenly had to think of Emma. He had forgotten her the whole morning. Now suddenly the grief of yesterday and the day before sat on his neck again, as heavy as ever. He went quietly up to his little room, threw himself on the bed, and groaned with deep torment. He wanted to cry, but his eyes stayed dry. Hopelessly he saw himself given over again to the consuming longing whose goal was dark to him and which gnawed at him like a cruel disease. His head stormed and ached, and his throat hurt from stifled sobbing.

Dinner was torture. He had to answer to his father and tell about things and put up with all sorts of little jokes, for Papa was in a good humor. Hardly had they eaten when he ran out into the garden and spent a quarter of an hour there in the sun, half dreaming; then it was time to go back to the workshop.

Already in the morning he had gotten red calluses on his hands; now they began to hurt in earnest, and by evening they were so swollen that he could not take hold of anything without pain. And before quitting time he still had to clean up the whole workshop under August’s direction.

Saturday was still worse. His hands burned; the calluses had swelled into blisters. The master was in a bad mood and cursed at the slightest occasion. August comforted him, it is true, that the business with the calluses lasted only a few days, then one had

hard hands and felt nothing anymore; but Hans felt utterly miserable, squinted at the clock the whole day, and scraped hopelessly away at his little wheel.



In the evening, while they were cleaning up, August told him in a whisper that he was going out to Bielach tomorrow with a few friends; it was going to be a fine, merry time, and Hans must not be missing on any account. He would come by for him at two o'clock. Hans said yes, although he would have liked best to stay lying at home the whole Sunday, so miserable and tired was he. At home old Anna gave him an ointment for his sore hands; he went to bed at eight o'clock and slept until well into the morning, so that he had to hurry to get to church with his father in time.

At the noon meal he began to talk about August and said he wanted to go out into the country with him today. His father had nothing against it, even gave him fifty pfennigs, and only demanded that he be back for supper.

As Hans strolled through the lanes in the lovely sunshine, he took pleasure in Sunday again for the first time in months. The street was more solemn, the sun more cheerful, and everything more festive and beautiful when one had working days behind one with black hands and tired limbs. He understood now the butchers and tanners, bakers and smiths, who sat on the sunny benches in front of their houses and looked so royally cheerful, and he no longer regarded them as wretched philistines. He looked after the workers, journeymen, and apprentices who went strolling in rows or into the taverns, their hats a little askew on their heads, with white collars and in brushed Sunday clothes. Mostly, though not always, the craftsmen kept among themselves, joiners with joiners, masons with masons, stuck together, and upheld the honor of

their trade, and among them the metalworkers were the most distinguished guild, the mechanics at the very top. All that had something homely about it, and even if much of it was a little naive and ridiculous, still behind it lay hidden the beauty and the pride of the crafts, which even today still stand for something joyful and sound, and of which even the most wretched tailor's apprentice still receives a little gleam that no factory worker and no shopkeeper either has.

As the young mechanics stood in front of Schuler's house, calm and proud, nodding to passersby and chatting among themselves, one could see well enough that they formed a dependable fellowship and needed no stranger, not even on Sunday at their pleasures.

Hans felt this too and was glad to belong among them. But he felt a little fear of the planned Sunday pleasure, for he knew already that among the mechanics the enjoyment of life went on in a solid and abundant way. Perhaps they would even dance. Hans could not do that, but otherwise he meant to hold his own as well as possible and, if need be, to risk a little hangover. He was not used to drinking much beer, and in smoking he had with difficulty got to the point where he could finish a cigar, cautiously, without misery and disgrace.

August greeted him with festive joy. He reported that the older journeyman did not want to come along, but in his place a mate from another workshop was coming, so that they would be four at least, and that was enough to turn a whole village upside down. Everyone could drink as much beer today as he liked, for he was paying for all of them. He offered Hans a cigar; then the four of them set off slowly, strolled slowly and proudly through the town, and only down at Linden Square began to march faster so as to get to Bielach in good time.

The surface of the river glittered blue, gold, and white; through the almost completely bare maples and acacias of the avenues a mild October sun shone down warmly; the high sky was cloudless and light blue. It was one of those quiet, pure, and friendly autumn days on which all the beauty of the summer that is past fills the mild air like a painless, smiling memory, on which children forget the season and think they must go looking for flowers, and on which the old men and women gaze into the air with musing eyes from the window or from the bench in front of the house, because it seems to them that the friendly memories, not only of the year but of their whole life that has run its course, are flying visibly through the clear blue. But the young are in good spirits and praise the fine day, each according to his gifts and temperament, with libations or with sacrifices, with song or dance, with drinking bouts or with grand brawls, for everywhere fresh fruit tarts have been baked, young cider or wine lies fermenting in the cellar, and fiddle or accordion in front of the taverns and on the linden squares celebrates the last fine days of the year and invites them to dance and sing songs and play the games of love.

The young fellows walked briskly along. Hans smoked his cigar with an air of carelessness and himself wondered that it agreed with him quite well. The journeyman told about his years on the road, and no one took offense at his talking big; that went with it. Even the most modest journeyman, once he is in steady work and safe from eyewitnesses, tells of his days on the road in a grand and dashing, indeed a legendary tone. For the wonderful poetry of the wandering journeyman's life is the common property of the people, and through each single one of them it composes the old traditional adventures anew, with new arabesques; and every tramp and beggar of the road, when he gets to telling stories, has in him a piece of the immortal Till Eulenspiegel and a piece of the immortal Straubinger, the eternal tramping journeyman.

“Well, in Frankfurt, where I was then, damn it, that was life! Did I never tell you how a rich merchant, one of those slicked-up monkeys, wanted to marry my master’s daughter; but she sent him packing, because she liked me a size better, and she was my sweetheart for four months, and if I hadn’t got into a row with the old man I’d be sitting there now as his son-in-law.”

And he went on to tell how the master, the scoundrel, had tried to push him around, the miserable slave driver, and once had dared to raise his hand against him; but he had not said a word, only swung his forging hammer and given the old man a look like this, and the old man had gone away very quietly, because he was fond of his skull, and then afterward had given him notice in writing, the cowardly wretch. And he told about a great battle in Offenburg where three metalworkers, he among them, had beaten seven factory hands half to death—anyone who comes to Offenburg need only ask Long Schorsch; he’s still there and was in on it that time.

All this was told in a coolly brutal tone, but with great inner zeal and relish, and everyone listened with deep pleasure and resolved in secret to tell this story himself someday, somewhere else, to other mates. For every metalworker has once had his master’s daughter for a sweetheart and has once gone at a bad master with a hammer and has once thrashed seven factory hands miserably. Now the story is set in Baden, now in Hesse or in Switzerland; now instead of the hammer it was the file or a red-hot iron; now instead of factory hands it was bakers or tailors; but they are always the old stories, and people always like to hear them again, for they are old and good and do honor to the guild. Which is not to say that there are not always, again and again, and still today, men among the wandering journeymen who are geniuses at living or geniuses at inventing, which at bottom is the same thing, after all.

August especially was carried away and delighted. He laughed constantly and agreed, already felt himself half a journeyman, and blew the tobacco smoke into the golden air with a connoisseur's look of contempt. And the storyteller went on playing his part, for it mattered to him to present his coming along as a good-natured condescension, since as a journeyman he really did not belong with the apprentices on Sunday and ought to have been ashamed to help the boy drink up his pennies.

They had gone a good stretch down the highroad along the river; now they had the choice between a slowly climbing little carriage road that led uphill in a curve and a steep footpath that was only half as long. They chose the carriage road, though it was long and dusty. Footpaths are for workdays and for gentlemen out for a walk; but the common people love the highroad, especially on Sundays; its poetry has not yet been lost for them. To climb steep footpaths, that is for country folk or for nature lovers from the city; it is a labor or a sport, but no pleasure for the people. A highroad, on the other hand, where one gets along comfortably and can chat as one goes, where one spares one's boots and Sunday clothes, where one sees wagons and horses, meets and overtakes other strollers, encounters dressed-up girls and groups of singing young fellows, where jokes are called after one that one returns with a laugh, where one can stand and gossip and, if single, run after the rows of girls and laugh after them, or in the evening bring personal differences with good mates to expression and settlement by deeds! A journeyman is never so stupid as to exchange the merry, comfortable, and rewarding road for footpaths, and no more is the small citizen of the town.

So they took the carriage road, which wound uphill calmly and amiably in a great curve, like someone who has time and does not care for shedding sweat. The journeyman took off his coat and carried it over his shoulder on his stick; instead of telling stories

he had now begun to whistle, in an exceedingly bold and lusty way, and he whistled until after an hour they arrived in Bielach. A few gibes had been aimed at Hans, which did not bother him much and which August parried more eagerly than he did himself. And now they stood before Bielach.



The village lay with red tile roofs and silver-gray thatched roofs bedded among fruit trees in their autumn colors, overtopped behind by the dark mountain forest.

The young people could not agree on which tavern they should stop at. The Anchor had the best beer, but the Swan the best cakes, and at the Sharp Corner there was a pretty innkeeper's daughter. At last August got his way that they should go to the Anchor, and hinted with a wink that the Sharp Corner would hardly run away during a few glasses and would still be there to be found afterward. Everyone was content with that, and so they went into the village, past the stables and the low farmhouse windows set with pots of geraniums, toward the Anchor, whose golden sign glittered invitingly in the sun over two young, round chestnut trees. To the sorrow of the journeyman, who absolutely wanted to sit inside, the taproom was overcrowded, and they had to take places in the garden.

The Anchor was, by its guests' notions, a fine establishment, that is, not an old village tavern but a modern brick cube with too many windows, with chairs instead of benches and a quantity of colored tin advertising signs, and also with a waitress dressed in city fashion and an innkeeper who was never to be seen in his shirtsleeves but always in a complete brown suit in the latest style. He was really bankrupt, but had leased his own house from his chief creditor, a big brewer, and since then had become even more

genteel. The garden consisted of one acacia tree and a large wire trellis, half grown over for the time being with wild vine.

"Your health, boys!" cried the journeyman, and clinked glasses with all three. And to show himself off, he drained the whole glass at one draught.

"Say, pretty miss, there wasn't anything at all in that; bring me another one right away!" he called to the waitress, holding out his glass to her across the table.

The beer was excellent, cool and not too bitter, and Hans relished his glass happily. August drank with a connoisseur's air, smacked his tongue, and smoked meanwhile like a bad stove, which Hans quietly admired.

It was not so bad, after all, to have one's jolly Sunday like this and sit at the tavern table like someone who has the right to and has earned it, and with people who knew how to live and be merry. It was fine to laugh along and now and then to risk a joke oneself; it was fine and manly, after drinking up, to bang one's glass down on the table with emphasis and call out carelessly, "Another one, miss!" It was fine to drink to an acquaintance at another table, to let the cold cigar stub hang in one's left hand, and to push one's hat back on one's neck like the others.

The strange journeyman who had come along now began to warm up and tell stories too. He knew of a metalworker in Ulm who could drink twenty glasses of beer, of the good Ulm beer, and when he was finished he wiped his mouth and said: Right, now a nice little bottle of wine! And he had known a stoker in Cannstatt who could eat twelve sausages one after another and had won a bet with it. But a second bet like that he had lost. He had made bold to eat his way through the whole bill of fare of a little inn, and he had indeed eaten almost everything, but at the end of the bill of fare came four different kinds of cheese, and when he was at the

third, he pushed the plate away and said: Better die now than one more bite!

These stories too met with rich applause, and it turned out that here and there on earth there are persevering drinkers and eaters, for everyone knew of some such hero and his feats. With one it was "a man in Stuttgart," with another "a dragoon, in Ludwigsburg, I think"; with one it had been seventeen potatoes, with another eleven pancakes with salad. They brought out these occurrences with matter-of-fact seriousness and gave themselves up with comfort to the recognition that there are, after all, many kinds of fine gifts and remarkable people, and some crazy characters among them too. This comfort and this matter-of-factness are old, venerable heirlooms of every tavern-table philistinism and are imitated by the young people just as drinking, talking politics, smoking, marrying, and dying are.

At the third glass Hans asked whether there were no cakes. They called the waitress and learned that no, there were no cakes, at which everyone grew terribly indignant. August stood up and said that if there were not even cakes, they could go one house farther. The strange journeyman cursed the miserable establishment; only the one from Frankfurt was for staying, for he had struck up a little something with the waitress and had already stroked her intensively several times. Hans had watched, and this sight along with the beer had strangely excited him. He was glad that they were leaving now.

When the bill had been paid and they all stepped out into the street, Hans began to feel his three glasses a little. It was a pleasant feeling, half tiredness, half spirit of enterprise; there was also something like a thin veil before his eyes, through which everything looked more distant and almost unreal, the way one sees in a dream. He had to laugh all the time, had set his hat a bit more boldly askew, and felt himself an exceptionally jolly fellow. The one

from Frankfurt whistled again in his warlike way, and Hans tried to walk in step to it.

At the Sharp Corner it was fairly quiet. A few farmers were drinking new wine. There was no beer on tap, only bottles, and at once each of them had one set before him. The strange journeyman wanted to show himself generous and ordered a big apple tart for them all together. Hans suddenly felt a tremendous hunger and ate several pieces of it one after another. It was dim and comfortable sitting in the old brown taproom on the solid, broad benches along the walls. The old-fashioned sideboard and the huge stove vanished in the half-darkness; in a big cage with wooden bars two titmice fluttered, for whom a full branch of red rowanberries had been stuck through the bars as food.

The innkeeper came to the table for a moment and bade the guests welcome. After that it was a while before a conversation got going. Hans took a few little sips of the sharp bottled beer and was curious whether he would really manage the whole bottle.

The one from Frankfurt swaggered away again dreadfully about vintage festivals in the vineyards of the Rhineland, about life on the road and in the flophouses; they listened to him gladly, and Hans too could not stop laughing.

All at once he noticed that he was no longer quite right. Every moment the room, table, bottles, glasses, and companions flowed together into a soft brown cloud and took shape again only when he roused himself vigorously. From time to time, when talk and laughter swelled more violently, he laughed aloud with them or said something that he at once forgot again. When they clinked glasses, he joined in, and after an hour he saw with astonishment that his bottle was empty.

“You’ve got a good swallow,” said August. “Want another?”

Hans nodded, laughing. He had imagined a drinking bout like this to be much more dangerous. And when the one from

Frankfurt now struck up a song and they all joined in, he too sang along at the top of his voice.

Meanwhile the room had filled up, and the innkeeper's daughter came to help the waitress serve. She was a tall, handsomely built person with a healthy, strong face and calm brown eyes.

When she set the new bottle down in front of Hans, the journeyman sitting next to him at once bombarded her with his most elegant gallantries, to which, however, she paid no ear. Perhaps to show him her disregard, or perhaps because she liked the fine little boy's head, she turned to Hans and quickly ran her hand over his hair; then she went back to the sideboard.

The journeyman, who was already on his third bottle, followed her and took every pains to get a conversation going with her, but without success. The tall girl looked at him indifferently, gave no answer, and soon turned her back on him. Then he came back to the table, drummed with the empty bottle, and cried with sudden enthusiasm, "Let's be jolly, children; clink glasses!"

And now he told a juicy story about women.

Hans heard nothing more than a muddy jumble of voices, and when he was nearly finished with his second bottle, talking and even laughing began to come hard to him. He wanted to go over to the titmouse cage and tease the birds a little; but after two steps he grew dizzy, very nearly fell, and turned back carefully.

From then on his boisterous merriment slackened more and more. He knew that he was drunk, and the whole drinking no longer seemed funny to him. And as if at a great distance he saw all sorts of trouble awaiting him: the way home, a bad scene with his father, and tomorrow morning the workshop again. Gradually his head began to ache too.

The others too had had enough of a good thing. In a clear moment August asked to pay and got little back on his taler. Chattering and laughing, they went out into the street, dazzled by

the bright evening light. Hans could hardly keep himself upright anymore; he leaned, swaying, on August and let himself be pulled along.

The strange metalworker had turned sentimental. He sang “Tomorrow I Must Leave This Place” and had tears in his eyes.

They really meant to go home, but as they passed the Swan, the journeyman insisted on going in there too. In the doorway Hans pulled himself free.

“I have to go home.”

“Why, you can’t even walk by yourself anymore,” laughed the journeyman.

“Yes, I can. I—have to—go home.”

“Then at least have a schnapps first, little one! It’ll put you back on your feet and set your stomach right. Sure, you’ll see.”

Hans felt a small glass in his hand. He spilled a lot of it; the rest he swallowed and felt it burn like fire in his gullet. A violent nausea shook him. Alone he staggered down the front steps and got out of the village, he did not know how. Houses, fences, and gardens turned past him crookedly and confusedly.

Under an apple tree he lay down in the damp meadow. A host of disgusting feelings, tormenting fears, and half-finished thoughts kept him from falling asleep. He felt soiled and disgraced. How was he to get home? What was he to tell his father? And what was to become of him tomorrow? He felt so broken and miserable, as if he must now rest, sleep, and be ashamed for an eternity. His head and eyes hurt, and he did not even feel enough strength in himself to get up and walk on.

Suddenly, like a belated, fleeting wave, a touch of his earlier merriment came back; he made a face and sang to himself:

Oh, my dear Augustine,
Augustine, Augustine,
Oh, my dear Augustine,
All is lost.

And hardly had he finished singing when something hurt him in his innermost being, and a muddy flood of unclear images and memories, of shame and self-reproach, stormed in on him. He groaned aloud and sank sobbing into the grass.

After an hour, when it was already getting dark, he got up and walked unsteadily and laboriously downhill.

Mr. Giebenrath had scolded at length when his boy failed to come home for supper. When nine o'clock came and Hans was still not there, he laid out a stout cane of rattan that had not been used for a long time. The fellow probably thought he had already outgrown his father's rod? He would have something coming to him when he got home!

At ten o'clock he locked the front door. If his lordship the son wanted to go gallivanting at night, he could see where he would end up.

Nevertheless he did not sleep, but waited with growing fury from hour to hour for a hand to try the latch and shyly pull the bell. He imagined the scene—the vagabond would get what was coming to him! The young rascal would probably be drunk, but he would sober up all right, the scamp, the sneak, the miserable wretch! Even if he had to break every bone in his body.

At last sleep overcame him and his rage.

At the same time Hans, so threatened, was already drifting cool and still and slow down the dark river through the valley. Disgust, shame, and suffering had been taken from him; the cold, bluish autumn night looked down on his slight body drifting darkly along; the black water played with his hands and hair and blanched lips.

No one saw him, unless perhaps the shy otter going out to hunt before daybreak, which eyed him slyly and glided silently past him. No one knew either how he had got into the water. Perhaps he had lost his way and slipped at a steep spot; perhaps he had wanted to drink and lost his balance. Perhaps the sight of the beautiful water had lured him, so that he bent over it, and since night and the pale moon looked up at him so full of peace and deep rest, weariness and fear drove him with quiet compulsion into the shadows of death.

During the day they found him and carried him home. The terrified father had to put his stick aside and let his accumulated fury go. He did not weep, it is true, and let little be seen, but the following night he again stayed awake and now and then looked through the crack of the door at his child, who had grown still and lay on a clean bed and, with his fine forehead and his pale, clever face, still looked as if he were something special and had the inborn right to a different fate from other people. On his forehead and hands the skin was a little scraped, bluish red; the handsome features slumbered; over the eyes lay the white lids; and the mouth, not quite closed, looked contented and almost cheerful. It looked as though the boy had suddenly been broken off in his blossoming and torn from a joyful course, and the father too, in his weariness and lonely grief, succumbed to this smiling illusion.

The funeral drew a great number of mourners and curious people. Once again Hans Giebenrath had become a celebrity in whom everyone was interested, and once again the teachers, the rector, and the town pastor took part in his fate. They all appeared in frock coats and solemn top hats, followed the funeral procession, and stood for a moment at the grave, whispering among themselves. The Latin teacher looked especially melancholy, and the rector said softly to him, "Yes, Professor, something could have

been made of him. Isn't it a pity that it's precisely with the best ones that we almost always have bad luck?"

With the father and old Anna, who wept without stopping, Master Flaig stayed behind at the grave.

"Yes, a thing like this is hard, Mr. Giebenrath," he said sympathetically. "I was fond of the boy too."

"You can't understand it," sighed Giebenrath. "He was so gifted, and everything went well, after all, school, examination—and then all at once one misfortune after another!"

The shoemaker pointed after the frock coats going out through the churchyard gate.

"There go a few gentlemen," he said softly, "who helped bring him to this too."

"What?" the other started up, and stared at the shoemaker doubtfully and in alarm. "Why, damn it, how do you mean?"

"Calm yourself, neighbor. I only meant the schoolmasters."

"How so? How do you mean?"

"Oh, nothing more. And you and I, we too perhaps neglected a good deal with the boy, don't you think?"

Over the little town a cheerful blue sky was spread; in the valley the river glittered; the fir-covered mountains shone blue, soft and full of longing, into the distance. The shoemaker smiled finely and sadly and took the arm of the man, who, out of the stillness and the strangely painful fullness of thought of this hour, walked hesitantly and awkwardly toward the lowlands of his accustomed existence.

Colophon

Beneath the Wheel

A Novel

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