# O love,
# so long as thou canst love!

A Christmas Edition for the Young
by

Leonie von Kleist
née Countess Kospoth

First Edition
Karlsruhe
Publishing House of brothers Pollmann
formerly Th. Gerbracht's Printing House
1887

Digitized in 2014 (in German) by Sigurd von Kleist.
Translation with ChatGPT 2025.
The original edition contained four woodcut illustrations.
These are missing in the scanned book.
At the end there has been added information about the authoress, a picture of her shortly after the appearance of the book, as well as pictures of her parents.

Childhood Memories

for my children

set down and

dedicated

to the memory

of the most faithful of mothers

by the Authoress

## Foreword

Ah, how cold it is; the wind lashes the rain against the windowpanes and shakes the last leaves from the trees. Winter is coming on in full force now; the day is so short—so very early it grows dark, and then there are those long, quiet twilight hours. A twilight hour—well, everyone knows what that is. In summer there are no homely dusk-hours; but when there is storm and snow outside, then comes that little hour when busy hands rest, when it is too dark to work and yet too early to light the lamp. Then one stretches oneself comfortably in an armchair by the hearth, where a merry fire burns, and gazes dreamily into the flickering glow. As a child I loved this hour above all others—for then my little mother took me upon her lap and told me beautiful tales. Most of all, however, I liked it when she told of her own childhood and youth, and ever and ever again I had the same stories retold to me, and never grew tired of hearing them. I so lived myself into what I heard that it really seemed to me as though I had experienced it myself—as though I knew all those places and people. Now I dream of the time when you, my two darlings, will be big enough to nestle against me and let yourselves be told of my childhood. Even thou, my little Ewald, art still too small, and then thy little sister, whom the dear God gave us but a few weeks since. Many an hour have I now spent in idleness—dreaming of the future, of the past. The blue little flames in the hearth played their mischievous game, and while I watched them, my eyes grew weary, and in the half-slumber that wrapped me round there came dear, precious figures and told me

old and new tales. They told, too, that soon again the dear Christmas tree would burn—with its many lights—kindling bright joy wherever it shines; they told so long that, scarcely aware of it, I took the pen in hand and told anew what they had said to me. Bright and clear rose pictures from my childhood—brightest of all the picture of her to whom I owe all those blissful, merry hours. Therefore, when I tell them to you, my darlings—to thee, my fair-haired Ewald, and to thee, thou little dark-haired Edeltraut—these memories of youth, these lines are nevertheless dedicated to her who taught my childish mind to grasp all that is good and fair, and my child's heart to look up with grateful love to God, from whom indeed all things come. Yea, to my dear unforgettable mother be these lines dedicated in the tenderest love.

Stockholm,
in November 1883. **The Authoress**.

Contents

1

## The Parents

As far back as I can remember, my heart has always clung to my mother with an especially fervent love. The sister nearest me in age was, however, four and a half years older; and when she had died, the other brothers and sisters were so much older that I then became quite the benjamin of the nest—and for a time even a very spoiled benjamin. To be loved is already, even for a child's heart, the very essence of the highest happiness. I remember what a lovely feeling it was when my good little mother would tell how infinitely delicate and small I had been—and how many an anxious hour she had had on my account—how many a sleepless night she had spent at my little bed. How the truest, most self-sacrificing love shone from her eyes when she told of it. For as long as I can think back, my little bed stood beside my mother's, both beneath a great white canopy; yes, that place remained mine when I was already a grown-up girl—and only when the long, grievous illness came which, after almost two years of unspeakably heavy suffering, robbed us children of the truest, most self-sacrificing mother—only then had I to give it up. How the faithful mother's eye watched over all! In my lack of understanding it often seemed a burden to me then—today I know it was but the deepest love, my mother's wish that her children should indeed be quite perfect in everything. How often later did we tease her about her fear that one of us might grow humpbacked, and it happened rather often that the good old family doctor, Dr. M., had to see how matters stood with a high shoulder

or a high hip, and so forth. As anxious as the good mother was in caring for our bodies, so carefully did she watch over the development of mind and soul. She procured us capable teachers and governesses, insisted most strictly that foreign languages and music be pursued. In my childhood one learned chiefly French; English I was allowed to begin only at fourteen, since the good mother could not abide that language. She found it unpleasing to eye and ear. Whether it was that my first bonne—a Parisian, an old malicious Madame Hiller, who tormented the three-year-old child in every manner—instilled into me the aversion for her language which I felt for herself, or whether it was already then an unconscious racial dislike that gradually developed, really without being specially fostered—at any rate I have always retained a decided aversion to the French tongue, which in childhood I spoke as fluently as German. Every year we—rather I, for except for the short time when I shared lessons with my cousin—were examined before our parents. Next to my mother I owe my, to be sure, scanty knowledge—that it is not more is my fault alone—to an excellent governess, Miss Pf., with whom I am still in correspondence today. She knew how to inspire interest in the lessons and to guide my often quite difficult character. Universal history has always been my favorite study, and even today I prefer historical works to all others. So solicitous as my little mother was—for I think I rarely called her “Mama”; “Muttchen” or “Muttel,” which is surely genuine Silesian, and I am not at all ashamed of it—so solicitous as she was for body and mind, so did she also provide diversions and

carefully watch over my games. When I speak of my dolls—and all the splendors that rejoiced the child's heart—I shall return to this.

Stern as my mother was, yes, often very vehement at the first moment, I never shrank from confessing to her any little sin; my soul ever lay open before her like a book. There was never a misunderstanding between us, and my love for my mother was so great that, when later I was grown and involuntarily had to recognize some weakness in my mother's character, I nevertheless always closed my eyes to it, so that she might stand before me only as a shining image of the truest, most self-sacrificing love. Woe to those who drop into pure child-souls the poison of mistrust, who would rob children of faith in their parents. Every man has faults, for we are born in sin; and he who thinks he stands high, let him take heed that he fall not.

When the moment shall come that death shall close my eyes, then do I hope to God that I may die with the consciousness of having been just such a faithful mother as she to whom these lines are dedicated. If I speak only now of my beloved father, the reason is not a lack of filial love. When I, a little latecomer, was born, my good father was already near fifty—thus for me from the very first an older gentleman, who, through his short-sightedness and hardness of hearing, stood somewhat distant from a small child. That it was a disappointment to him that I was the sixth girl instead of a third son—he never bore it against me; and I myself have always been content with it. There

are uncountably many women who lament that they are only—just women. But the lot of woman, the calling of woman, has from of old appeared to me beautiful and exalted; and I verily believe that it is much easier for a man to fulfill all his duties than for a woman. Because, as has been said, my good father saw and heard poorly, he lived more in the inner than in the outer world. Thus, too, for the reasons named, he had to leave to my mother the conduct of affairs, the chief direction of the children's upbringing; and it was natural that in all sorrows and joys we turned to our mother. Through this certain seclusion in which my father lived—he heard after all only of the greater cares and vexations and remained unknowing of the smaller miseries of daily life, which indeed are what truly lessen the enjoyment of existence—he preserved a certain purity of heart, if I may use this expression of an older man, an ideal view of the world and of life. He lived in his books; music was his highest delight—he loved the hunt as far as he could devote himself to it—and he himself was—most dearly loved and honored by all, near and far. who stood to him. How good he was to us children—had it been in his power, he would have fetched us the stars from the blue firmament. Concerts and opera were to him the highest delight, and since he played everything by ear, it was a lasting delight as well. For music his hearing was extraordinarily keen, and no tone escaped him. For hours on end our good father played for us to dance—and even when we were grown, he never wearied of playing and of gladdening our youth. In those days many musicians still came into the country,

especially in summer; we called them, briefly, "Bohemians," whether that fitted or not. Since my father always gave them generous gifts, they never passed us by; and on my father's birthday, when the house was always open, several often came together, besides the military band from the neighboring garrison. Our offering for the Sunday alms-bag was always supplied by the good father—despite the small pocket-money we received—and on a summer Sunday our little singing was most richly rewarded by him. I still see myself standing by his bed and striking up:

> "The Lord, He has a golden cap,
> It's brimmed with ducats heap on heap;
> He'll surely take good counsel now
> And give me something I may keep."

The good father—how proud he was of his own, what a faithful, tender husband! My dear mother went before him into eternity by two years; often I heard how he plainly spoke with her in spirit, and then half aloud said: "My good, good Lottchen."

As calm as his life had flowed away, so unstruggling was his death—amidst a cheerful company he sank lifeless into my brother's arms! A friendly artist, of whom I shall speak again later, had made excellent drawings of my parents, beneath which they had chosen the following words as mottoes. My father's ran:

> "In woe there lies a rapture, and in delight a pain;
> Life's highest joy is this—to love and not to envy."

My mother had chosen:

> "Unhappier thing is nothing than evermore to feel
> Thou art not at thy home where thou at home
> shouldst be!"

I find that both sayings are exceedingly characteristic: in the one, the gentle, loving principle predominates; in the other, the active, shaping spirit. The only thorn that remembrance leaves me concerning my parents is this—that I was not always for them so loving and so obedient as I ought to have been. Therefore, you children, whether great or small, if there are still parents' hearts that beat warm for you, esteem this as the highest good; let nothing come between you that could thrust out love and gratitude. Freiligrath sings so beautifully:

> O love, so long as thou canst love,
> O love, so long as thou mayst love!
> The hour will come, the hour will come
> When thou by graves dost stand and mourn!
>
> Then kneel thou down beside the vault
> And hide thine eyes, grown dim and wet—
> They see the others nevermore—
> Within the graveyard's dripping grass.

And say: O look on me from high,
Who here beside thy grave doth weep;
Forgive that I have wounded thee—
Ah God! I meant it not for ill.

But he sees not and hears thee not,
He comes not that thou glad receive;
The mouth that oft hath kissed thee says
No more: “I long since pardoned thee.”

He did—long since forgave thee all—
Yet many a burning tear fell down
For thee and for thy bitter word;
But hush: he rests, he reached his goal!

O love, so long as thou canst love,
O love, so long as thou mayst love!
The hour will come, the hour will come
When thou by graves dost stand and mourn!

And ye, ye parents, take heed well to the little flower that grows in your children’s hearts—trust; it is a tender plant, a noli me tangere—look but once upon it roughly, and it will not open again; and love without trust is scarcely love. Then dark clouds come between your hearts, estrangement on both sides—and yet how precious it is when, even as an older man or an older woman, one still deals with the parents in reverence and love; for God has said as the fourth and chiefest commandment: “Honor thy father and thy mother, that it may go well with thee and that thou

mayest long live upon earth.”

## The Castle and the Garden

Castle B……
Still from shaded coverts there gleams
A shimmering castle forth;
I know the tower, the balconies,
The stone-hewn god, the gate.

From off the castle portal
The lions look so friendly on me;
I greet the old acquaintances
And hasten up the court.

There, beckoning behind those trees,
The little church smiles kind on me,
And in the vault deep down below
My parents sleep in peace.

Thus standest thou, O castle of my fathers,
Faithful and firm within my mind,
And the remembrance of my youth
Draws me to thee for evermore.

Be fruitful, O thou dear, dear soil,
I bless thee, softly, moved;
I bless thee doubly whosoe'er
As master hath the rightful claim.

And faith and love and constancy
The starry blazon mean,
A shelter to the man that's born
Beneath the shield of arms.

(After "castle Boncourt" by A. von Chamisso.)

My Armorial Shield
Poem by A. Count K.

Within my armorial shield
There are three little stars;
If ever these cease to be bright,
The shield itself will break.

The one is holy Faith,
The other Love is hight,
The third is Hope the steadfast—
Which ever still abode with me.

To my good Faith
I hold me True, faithful, fast, and firm;
That no man shall despoil me;
A knave alone forsakes it.

And Love is that sweet fetter
That still holds fast mankind;
If e'er the rosary be rent,
The world to nothing falls.

And Hope is that deep longing
For better deed and state;
Yea, it still rules within us,
Till we within the grave do rest.

Now tell me, friend of mine,
Is not my coat of arms fair—
Where Faith and Love and Hope so near
Together take their stand?

Yea, God bless thee, thou dear old castle, thou cradle of my childhood; a thousand fair and blissful memories are bound up with thee. And when, after long absence, the tower nods to me from afar, my heart still today beats with tender pride, with impetuous joy, toward the old home. Aye, even as swiftly does my heart beat to it now as when, a child, I came home from the distant school for the holidays—or when, full of pride, I showed to my future husband for the first time the castle of my fathers. And when I return today, I would fain hold you, my darlings, high aloft—so that the old castle may see you, it seems to me as though it had from of old taken its part in joy and sorrow—in all that, in the course of time, befell those who were born beneath its sheltering roof. And because I love it so, and your father loves it with me, I will tell you of many a blissful hour that I as a child have spent within it. For me they are all dear acquaintances—there the two stone lions that look so solemnly, as though they alone had to guard and shield the house; they belong among my dearest playmates. Scarcely had I outgrown the hand of my

nurse—the old "Muhme," as I ever called her—when I was already climbing the gray fellows; soon I sat boldly astride a lion, a switch in my hand, and dreamed that I was riding gaily along on the swiftest palfrey. Many a ride did I make upon the brave lions, and it seems to me even now as though they nodded kindly to me, as if proud that I had made my first riding attempts on them. On the right, when one enters the castle—in the second room—there did your mother, my darlings, first see the light of this world: so tiny and ugly a little creature that all the world wondered why it so much as looked in at all. Today there is a fair dining hall there, and the place where I sat upon my wedding day was almost the selfsame spot where my cradle stood. And what old friends the two stairways are!—hey, how like the wind one slid from above down along the banister! And then the splendid picture hall—above all in winter, in bad weather—the finest playground in all the world. There we played cat-and-mouse and "black man," and ball and "travelling," and despite our greatest efforts the ball never flew so high as to reach Apollo with the nine Muses, the ceiling painting. A broad marble ledge that runs to half the height of the hall would, however, often treacherously trap hoop and ball; and as one could only get higher by means of the tallest ladders, perhaps many a dear comrade still lies up there. Great fun it was when, before great companies assembled, the four mighty crystal chandeliers were let down from the dome of the tower. Longingly I stood then beside the colossi, and was happy when I might help with the cleaning. And all the mythological pictures set

between the marble columns of the hall—they are all old acquaintances. How gladly did I throw the ball at the grinning faun's head—though it was, of course, forbidden. Out on the balcony that looks into the garden a little birch struggled to grow; again and again was it cut away, and ever anew it thrust its slender stem through the crevices of the great gray ashlars. How old may it be, that little birch?—since I can remember it has swayed gracefully every summer, on its frail stem, beside the old gray balustrade. How I love thee, thou homely old picture hall! In all the world's lands I have seen the fairest halls; yet my grateful heart would still today award thee the apple of Paris. Thou wast ever fair to me at every time; but enchantingly fair—a tale from the Thousand and One Nights—when the huge Christmas tree, with its countless lights, stretched and stretched itself and reached out its arms—and yet could not attain thy ceiling. But of Christmas I will not tell yet; so come, you little ones, and follow me up the stair. There to the left lay Grandmama's attic, a place altogether mysterious for a child's fancy, where, together with old Friederike, the old lady's-maid, goblins and sundry spirits played their mischievous game. I always slipped quickly past the locked door. So much the dearer to me was "our great attic"—there I could rummage gloriously; now I would lug down old broken toys of the elder brothers and sisters, which seemed to me far finer than my new ones; or I would deck the walls of my schoolroom with all manner of oil-paintings—remnants of a picture collection that had come over from Holland. Happiest of all was I when I found a portrait of the fair

foundress of the castle, Countess P.; for a fairy nimbus encompassed her for me. On the occasion of repairing the cupola knob, the tin capsule was opened, and it made upon me the deepest impression to read, among other things, that when the fair countess died she left some hundreds of gowns. The most diverse portraits of her, in the most manifold costumes, exist. Dearest to me was ever that picture where the beautiful ancestress sits dreamily beneath a tree, a half-slipped book in her hand; conformably to the taste of that period, the verses are French:

> “Que l’absence et l’amour
> Sont deux cruelles peines.
> Mais malgré tous les maux
> Qu'en recant mon coeur,
>
> S'il faut cesser d'aimer
> Pour finir mes douleurs,
> Plutôt toujours souffrir
> Que rompre mes chaînes.”

And now it goes another stair higher—again an attic, from which one can mount on two sides to the zinc-covered roof. Already from there the prospect is very pretty; but now there is yet another stair—a quite narrow ladder—leading up into the dome. Down again one went best backward. One breathed freely once the dark little space lay behind one and one had slipped, stooping, out through the little door.

It is indeed a pretty picture: close by the castle on the one side the court, with its mighty old silver poplars; close beside it the friendly little church, encompassed by the green churchyard; then the splendid lime-tree avenue; yonder the view of the chestnut avenue, whose boughs now arch across the broad road into a sheltering roof; then the castle garden, with its dark clumps of trees, the green lawns, and between them the white statues; and close by the castle, on the terrace, the six mighty firs, whose tops look even far over the castle. Some maintain that the trees do not suit the style of the castle, or that in stormy nights it is uncanny when the mighty trunks sway groaning to and fro, and must bow their crowns in humbleness, and the screech-owls cry out among the branches. I, however, love them beyond words, the old trees; they look down upon us as though they would say: "We know you all—you children of this house! We have seen how your forefathers dwelt here in powdered peruke and hoop-skirt; we beheld all the motley stir of the last century—the splendid gilded coaches, the runners and outriders in their richly embroidered velvet doublets; then came the bloody war, and friend and foe alike—the Russian and the Frenchman—wreaked wild havoc in the castle. Your grandsire was far away, and your beautiful grandmama shed bitter tears when the French gave balls and festivities, or when they destroyed the stone gods and ravaged the garden. We saw your parents enter as young wedded folk; we saw joy, we saw sorrow, enter this house. And though you abide ever so far away, you children of this house, beyond the reach of mortal eye, yet we hear of you; for the

airs that caress us, and sun and moon and stars, bring us tidings of you who are far. And we tell it again in turn; but you mortals do not understand it when, in mourning and in pain, we bend and lament, or when in quiet gladness we murmur softly with our boughs. And thus shall we stand and gaze when long since the angel of death has closed your eyes, and shall see how children and children's children gather about the old house in the changeful course of the years." So whisper the old firs—ah yes, they could tell many a thing; and often, when I was far, far from home, in dark nights I fancied I heard their murmuring, and saw how, whispering mysteriously, they bent their crowns toward one another.

As a child it made a great impression on me that all that my eye could see, even to the forest's edge, belonged to my father—every bush, every tree, was known to me. Gladly on Sundays I looked down upon the court and the village street—everywhere rest, peace, and order; even the hens cackled less loudly, so it seemed to me, and the bleating of the lambs sounded muffled from the half-opened door. One thing I must not forget, and that is the "stone hall," so called for its stone wall and floor. This stone floor has the peculiarity of being an unerring weather-prophet; for as soon as it gets damp dark patches, rain is to be expected. At the beginning of the century, in the marble frames, oil-paintings representing the story of Don Quixote were set in. But the evil war, that swallowed so much blood-money, compelled my grandparents to sell these pictures to a stock-exchange nabob. A glass door

leads from the stone hall out onto the terrace—the favorite place in summer of all the household. Commonly it was in May, at Father's birthday, that the terrace put on its summer dress; then the carriage horses were put to, and the orangery was brought out of its winter quarters—partly onto the terrace itself, partly forming alleys along the broad cross-walks of the middle garden.

I still remember vividly from my earliest youth that at that time there was verily a harvest. Then all hands were busy, and the golden fruit was daintily wrapped in paper, and thus many a basket was filled and carried away. Today only a few trees remain, and even these will ere long be gone. And as the orangery was the sign of coming summer, so it gave warning of the approaching late autumn. Seldom did it stand outside as late as October; how bare—how desolate it looked those first days when it was carried back into the glasshouses! Everywhere the tracks of heavy wagon wheels, some blocks left behind, a few broken twigs—until these signs too were effaced by the gardener's ordering hand. And all the glasshouses were plundered; for beneath the two great firs stood, and still stand today, tiered frames thick set with the children of a more southern flora; in front, tables and benches. No fair day passed but breakfast and afternoon bread were taken there, and often in the middle of the terrace the long evening table was spread. So then, so still today. The terrace landings are enclosed with clipped beech hedges; and as these in some places formed little arbors or rooms with natural seats, these hedges belonged among my

favorite playgrounds. There I sat either in a comfortable armchair shaped from the bent boughs of the old beeches and read; or I had installed myself domestically with my dolls in such an arbor; and if I had playmates, the dolls were divided, and then we paid the fairest visits from one leaf-house to another. Yet best of all it played down below in the garden, in the so-called children's garden. To right and left at the far end there were two facing plots furnished with high fences. The one belonged to Grandmama, the other to us children. At the end of the little garden stood a wondrous pretty little house, made of two rooms, each with a window. How plainly I see it before me—the outer walls clad with diagonally laid white birch-bark, with moss between; the roof thatched a little overhanging with straw. Within, neat little furniture in peasant style; the wall-paper—I could paint it—on a white ground little round pictures portraying Chinese houses with Chinese before them. On the left side of the little house a small stair led to the attic. In summer I moved down with all my dolls, and what precious hours they were that I passed there! The middle path was arched over by a bower wreathed with vine; to right and left little plots, which in spring were carefully tilled. The produce must have been very good, for it was always bought at the highest prices by the paternal rent-office. On one birthday the good mother surprised me and a little cousin, who at that time was brought up with me, with charming Silesian peasant costumes—yes, even the "Kommode," the cap with the gay calico cover and the long white "Schnippe," was not lacking. In this dress I was then allowed to work

below and to dispose and order as I pleased. But the children's garden yielded also flowers in plenty and truly excellent fruit—primroses in all colors with their velvety leaves, violets, and the most splendid centifolias. And all the trees and shrubs planted by us children—today they tower far above our heads—the remains of the dear old playground, most of it, to be sure, has had to yield to the gardener's hand, and the dear little house has disappeared. The tooth of time gnawed at it without pity, and so, being near to falling in, it was taken down. In those days a high majestic wall still enclosed the garden, a great gate denied strangers entrance; today the wall is low and the gate stands open—for in the course of time many a barrier has fallen, and many another will yet fall. From one of the seats, called the Belvedere, I liked to climb onto the half-foot-broad wall and run round upon it like a little squirrel. Perhaps I then fancied myself as bold as the knight upon the ring-wall of Kynast; at any rate there was scarcely a wall, nor a fence, that had been too high for me. Many a hole was then secretly darned, and many a spot washed out of my white garments in haste, ere I showed myself to my mother's all-seeing eye. Close by the little garden there still stood a roundabout and a swing—but the latter was too heavy, and the former was already, in my time, far gone in decay.

## 20

### Grandmother, Aunt Bantel, the Friends of the House

When one entered the castle, the lower rooms of the left wing belonged to Grandmama—by the house and village folk called "Countess Mama." These were for us children hallowed rooms, which we for the most part entered only on tiptoe. From them there breathed upon us a waft of the stricter etiquette. No unrest, no sound penetrated hither, and even the furniture, the pictures, looked majestically down upon us—as though a share of the reverence due to their mistress belonged to them also. Looking out into the castle court lay the bedchamber, which had once been inhabited, by the fair ancestress, Countess P.; the maidens' room; a little pantry, which always contained the choicest dainties; and a little kitchen—in which, in my earliest youth, the lady's-maid Friederike held sway. I see her plainly before me still—small, somewhat wizened, always in a gray dress with a like short pelerine; the scanty hair drawn back in a smooth parting; with her weather-beaten, for the most part unfriendly face, ever starting in fright, or stretching out one of her bony fingers as if warding one off, she made indeed no friendly picture. Filled with the greatest hatred of mankind, she loved only my grandmother, to whom she was, however, also devoted with almost dog-like fidelity—and at the same time in some matters she tyrannized. By the servants she was hated and feared, and there was no lack of dark rumors; and when she died, among them there remained the firm belief that she found no rest in the grave and that she still haunts the castle today. She was, that is certain, always

ungracious—but we children surely owed her many an evil hour, albeit that was most strictly forbidden. We avoided this passage as much as possible; for the most part we went from the stone hall into the so-called "yellow room." I never liked this room; Grandmama kept it quite specially for visits—her daughter, my dear aunt, godmother and name-sister L., or nieces and grandnieces—thus she lodged such guests there. Over a marble table in the taste of the Empire hung a mighty Venetian mirror with broad bronze frame, a sofa with table and chairs, étagères, and on the walls some precious pictures, in particular two hounds, and a waterfall by Ruysdael. Most uncanny to me was a bust-portrait of a man who held a burning light in his hand; perhaps it was that which alienated the room from me. Then came "the red parlor"—Grandmama's sitting-room. The walls were covered with costly dark-red silk damask; a large picture of Our Lady—a copy after a painting on wood attributed to Rubens or at least to one of his pupils and, as it stood in need of restoration, most carefully kept in a case; a high dark sofa; a large table; high-legged cane chairs; two wondrous fine old commodes on which stood costly Chinese vases; and little gilt side-tables. Then came Grandmother's little cabinet, in which she sat almost exclusively—there she worked, there she wrote, and from there her lively mind followed the events of great politics and of small domestic life. Down to her death—she reached the age of eighty-seven—she was a very beautiful, stately, truly noble figure. Her features were perhaps somewhat cold, and her eye looked earnest and stern; yet what and whom she loved, she loved

with her whole soul. For the poor she was endlessly good—how many stockings must have gone forth for them from her busy hands, and how lovingly she cared for needy kinsfolk. A bust-picture shows her to us in the attire of the beginning of this century, but that picture has always left me cold—it too is only a copy after a miniature. On the backboard stand these words of her own making:

> "So hath the Maker fashioned me,
> This is my bearing, this my dress,
> At five-and-twenty years.
> But if I silently have wept, have laughed;
> What I have strove to be,
> That never can the after-world be told!"

Anna Julie Dorothea Henriette Countess K., née von P., born the fourteenth of November 1784, died the twenty-ninth of July 1871.

In the year 1834 my grandfather died—thirty-seven years to live without the companion one hath chosen for life must be fearfully hard; children and grandchildren can never replace the love of the wedded mate.

Prince Pückler says of my grandmother in his famous letters that she belonged to the most beautiful women he had known, and to the few wholly virtuous. Flattering as this is for my grandmother, so sad is it for the female sex in general.

A bell, rung by the servant on both sides of the castle, called the household to meals. As the time was but short between the end of lessons and the midday dinner, and we in that interval yet had to change our dress, I commonly rushed down at the first stroke of the bell to kiss Grandmother's hand. To greet her otherwise I had not dared. Usually Grandmama ate with us, and it was upon Father's arm that she took her place. The dining-table was very broad and long—the head seats were taken by my mother and grandmother; on my mother's left sat my father—on my mother's right either the eldest of the children or the most distinguished guest of the house. Never would a guest of my parents have omitted to pay Grandmother a formal visit, or to let us go to bed without having kissed Grandmother's hand. In the last years Grandmama seldom came upstairs in the evenings; but then one member of the family stayed below with her—either playing cards with her, or working—whereupon Grandmother would gladly tell of her youth, and the listener listened more gladly still. Before my eyes stand so plainly all the things that ever surrounded Grandmother—the little crystal inkwell, resting in a mount of gilt bronze, that always stood upon the small tray; the little Moorish angel with the golden wings, brandishing above his head a golden serpent, while with the other hand he held a watch in a capsule of gilt bronze; the heavy seal of lapis lazuli set in steel; and thus yet numberless things besides. Now and then Grandmother gave a little entertainment in her rooms, and then it was the choicest dainties with which she regaled her

guests—pheasants, or oysters and caviar—things of which she knew that my mother was particularly fond. The little pantry contained, as a rule, all manner of very good things; such excellent quince cheese have I never eaten again—and even the great rolls of gingerbread tasted with Grandmama quite especially good. Nor must I forget the little Mimosa, Grandmother's lapdog—a tiny white dog with long silky hair, a native of Brazil. He was the gift of a niece, who had herself brought him. Mimosa closed the long line of favorites Grandmother had had; I can remember only her. Remarkably enough, the little dog never quite accustomed himself to the change of day and night, and kept to Brazilian time. If it was day with us, he mostly slept, and Grandmother often said that at night he ate and took his promenade.

Such a little Grandmother should properly be in every house; it teaches children reverence in dealing with older folk, and thereby, involuntarily, a bond is established between once and now. Almost as constantly as Grandmother, a sister of my mother lived with us—in the last years of her life indeed exclusively. Aunt Bantel was her name for us children—nay, in truth, for all nearer acquaintances; and even the servants who had been long in service permitted themselves at times to speak of Aunt Bantel—"Great-auntie" she was only to the very youngest generation—indeed, strictly speaking, great-great-aunt. A sorrowful nervous ailment would visit her at whiles—sometimes it would stay away for weeks; but when those days were past, in which her mental powers

were weakened, her cheerful temper quickly made her forget all, and she was content and merry. With age there come, especially in consequence of illness, many little peculiarities. Thus, for example, she liked to heap up a quantity of eatables—indeed only to give them away to the village children. Her window was the gathering-place of all the sparrows. The greatest joy to her were little gifts with which to bedeck herself—brooches, chains, lockets, ribbons, lace, flowers—and she often appeared with the most curious combination of these, in the happy consciousness of having adorned herself well.

Though gout and rheumatism tormented her much, her poor crooked fingers worked unceasingly, and numberless little children's jackets, bands, shoes, and blankets went forth from her busy hands. In her youth she had played the piano very well; later she chiefly loved real bravura pieces—marches, dances, and the like—and then her small stiff fingers hopped so busily over the keys that we called these pieces "flea-dances." Ah, and how gladly she played whist! To mastery she never brought it, to be sure, despite almost nightly play—the immediate leading of the singleton, or the running down of several aces one after another—upon which there was always said: "Long live the delivered kings"—that she could never unlearn. Now she too rests in the vault—the wish that her last shell might stand there was her greatest desire.

My parents' house was of the utmost hospitality—every guest was always welcome—and this was gladly and often

made use of by the neighbors, the officers of the near garrison, and, in general, the inhabitants of the little town. In later years every Sunday brought the married brothers and sisters; scarcely was church over when already one carriage or another came rolling up. For me this was especially fair—my eldest niece is but four and a half years younger than I—and so she was my dearest playmate and has become and remained my truest friend. How homelike were those Sundays, above all in winter. In the dear old living-room the whole family gathered, there was chatting—and for whole hours music was made; in the evening the already huge table did not suffice, and several leaves had to be put in. Then there was reading in distributed parts, or merry verses were composed—of which even today a stout bookful exists; in short, the evening vanished in a moment, and only late did the carriages roll home through the still village street. My eldest sister's house was for me almost a second home; weeks and months did I spend with her, which even today belong to my fairest memories. Perhaps unconsciously, it was on the other hand my married brother who exercised a decisive influence upon my character.

Because at my eighth year I lost the sister who, though four years older, yet stood nearest me in age, I had perhaps too much ingratiated myself, as the benjamin, into my mother's heart—and although she was still very strict, I must hear to this day: yes, thou hadst it good—Mother allowed thee so much that for us there could be no thought of. Certain it is that my governess had a hard post, and that

the brothers and sisters, too, were sometimes scolded on my account. I believe it was between my twelfth and thirteenth year at Christmas when the great turning-point came. On the second holy day guests, as usual, were expected, and I looked for two well-known young girls, the daughters of Herr von R. Herr and Frau von R. indeed came, but not the daughters, whereat I was most unhappy. But what I felt when I heard that my brother, on the next morning, said to his wife—ignoring my presence—Herr von R. had said he could no longer let his daughters consort with me, I was too ill-behaved and had too bad manners—that cannot be described. I was crushed, beyond all measure humbled—but the result was brilliant. On my birthday, in September, my brother and his wife made me a present of a charming little golden cross with turquoises, as a reward for complete amendment. Then, too, I learned that the whole story had been an invention of my brother's, and that my two acquaintances had at that time taken cold.

At festival times and in the holidays the house was always particularly full; of old acquaintances and kinsfolk I will single out but a few. There came Uncle Count A. D., ever cheerful and merry, a great Nimrod, whom, however, ill-luck pursued with us. I cannot at least remember that he ever had great trophies to show. His visits rejoiced the whole house, for he was highly diverting—he was comical in anger beyond measure. I remember that, after he had gone several days in vain to the hunt, the servant innocently proposed to him whether he would not shoot

the old sick dog—the rage!—it was enough to die of laughing—the poor fellow had meant no harm by it. Another time the poor uncle had lain for hours, in the rutting season, in the morning cold on the stand. His fine new great travelling pelisse he had left in the forester's carriage; when, after several hours, he came back frozen through, he found the pelisse beautifully warmed—for the new Polish coachman was taking his comfortable morning nap in it. For one who, like Uncle A., was of the most punctilious nicety, it is never agreeable to see one's things worn by others—and now his new pelisse, and thereto the more than doubtful cleanliness of a Polish knave! The one—I almost think the only—time when he would have been quite sure of a shot, the spite of fate pursued him. It was driving to stalk, close by the so-called breeding-pond; there at last stood a capital buck; most happily the great Nimrod takes aim—then the coachman turns round and says quite calmly, in his loudest voice: "No, Herr General—not that one—that is our Lord Count's roe-buck." In truth, this was the place to which my good father, with the rifle over his shoulder and the field-stool in his hand, betook himself almost every day. There he remained on the stand, and since his eyesight had become too weak to exercise the noble craft of the huntsman any longer, his heart rejoiced when he saw the stately buck quietly grazing there before his eyes. And "our Lord Count's roe-buck" was it called from then on—probably until the moment when it shifted to another spot and thereby lost its letter of freedom.

Another frequent dear guest was Baron O. B., who was at most a dish-hunter. He liked to come at Eastertide; on Good Friday my parents always went to the Holy Communion—but since, to my knowledge, Baron O. never went to church, it was known that at that time he always undertook a great walk "to the Temple." This lay close by the afore-mentioned breeding-pond—a ruined temple that had been erected by my grandfather—and thither little parties were sometimes made. Such small excursions to the Temple—or to "Papa's Place"—were usually made when the witty, amiable President S. came. He loved these outings exceedingly; then a collation or the evening meal was taken out of doors, and the echo had scarcely time to give back all the cheerfulness—the merry laughter and singing—that resounded through the wood. He too, the faithful friend, is no more—still do I hear his cheerful laughter—such fresh, witty, amiable men grow ever rarer. Of all the persons who stood near to my parents, the Economical Councillor J., the long-standing faithful adviser of my parents, has stood and will ever stand nearest to me. For many years he first lived as a bachelor in the little house to the right of the castle—but even when a young wife had moved in, I was allowed, as before, to go in and out as I pleased. The Economical Councillor J. was with us for six months when I, a little latecomer, was born, and so it is natural that he is closely interwoven with my earliest childhood. How splendid it was to ride on his shoulders or his knees; what beautiful stories he could tell; his sitting-room was our playground—I say "our," for up to my eighth year I had in

my dear departed sister Magdalena a playmate. A green curtain divided his large workroom into two parts—at play Magdalena once fastened upon it a pink taffeta ribbon with a black edge—this ribbon he still had carefully kept to this very day, the faithful friend—a relic—to which many another had been added from loving hands that rule no longer upon earth. How often the way simply led through the low-set window—then there came indeed times when I came demurely through the door; whichever way I took, I was ever welcome, and so I am today. Never yet has my mouth in vain asked for counsel—by word, by deed, an answer has ever been vouchsafed me. But many an earnest reproof, too, have I received from the faithful friend, many a bitter truth—but without these he were not the faithful friend that he is. His brothers also, two of them excellent physicians—what faithful friends they were. If there was danger, they were assuredly not summoned in vain, whithersoever it might be. Thus do I stand, with my household, to this day in truest friendship, in most heartfelt gratitude toward him and his people; and I only wish that I or my children may ever have occasion to discharge a small portion of the deep gratitude that I feel. Yet when I speak of faithful friends, I must not forget him, the dear steward H.—no longer a functionary—nay, he is the most faithful friend of the house. He too has carried me on his arms, as he today carries thee, his godchild, my little Ewald, and has played many an hour with me. As a schoolgirl I ever had a thousand requests; now I robbed pens from the great brown desk, now pencils, now writing-paper; or the little room next door was broken

open and the well-known little bag with hazelnuts plundered. For three and thirty years now he has shared joy and sorrow with us—I could not conceive of B. without him. And even today I plague him a little; it is no longer pens and pencils that I filch from him, but instead all manner of errands with which I tease the dear old friend; yet I know he bears me no ill will for it. For many years the little brown Zerline has been his faithful companion; every year she gladdens the world with a multitude of little brown and black puppies. If she accompanies her master on his walks, he must take her on the leash; for although she is a little dachshund and no hunting dog, she would gladly tug Mister Hare by the plume, or rouse pheasants and partridges from their rests. Ay, ay, even age—for the time of youth of the brave Zerli is long past—protects not against folly.

I had almost closed this chapter without mentioning the best friend and youthful playmate of my father, the good painter B. Plainly before my eyes stands his round, fresh, rosy face with the blond-gray, somewhat bristling moustache—ever the same in my memory—never younger, never older. With his slow manner of speaking and the strong Saxon dialect, he was much teased; and though no wit-sparkling, brilliant entertainer, he was yet the truest, dearest friend of my father—as indeed they called each other in their letters nothing else than Orestes and Pylades. Though he had not the color-gorgeous genius of a Makart, he was nevertheless a good genre painter—and charming pictures are those in which he has

immortalized the B. font and the village beauties. And truly charming little pictures are those he painted of us as children, which at that time formed a little gallery in my mother's cozy cabinet. Today the little pictures, like those whom they portray, are scattered to all the winds; and thou, my little heart's-blossom, callest the little blond curly-head in the white frock "little mother."

## 33

## Nothing but Old Acquaintances

If I give this chapter the title "Nothing but Old Acquaintances," that has a twofold reason. First, they are really all old—yea, already old—even in the earliest time of which I can remember them; and secondly old acquaintances—because they were known to all who knew my parents' house. The first place therefore belongs to my nurse, the good old "Muhme," as I called her and still call her, and as she is named throughout the village. The wet-nurse who was to rear me—a tiny, pitiful worm of earth—fell ill of typhus after six weeks; and so the bodily welfare of the youngest hopeful sprig was entrusted to the widowed Frau Dorothea Decke, and thus was the said little countess fed by means of rubber stopper and bottle with excellent cow's milk, to the unbounded astonishment of all, great and small—yea, to the astonishment of the whole family—how tall I grew. Whether this says exactly what I mean to say, I will leave undecided. Certain it is that, though at nine months I had the whooping-cough so badly that the veins burst upon my head, and that I was so delicate—or better said, so thin—that my bones were as sharp as needles, and the people cried out when I came near them with my elbows—yet sure it is that in my ninth year I began to fill out and to gain strength—and perhaps shall reach Methuselah's age. Moreover, I was unbelievably wild, wilder than ten boys, and my good Muhme would often shake her head anxiously and say: "Nay, the Lunchen, she'll yet break her neck and legs."

Right stately did my old Muhmchen look when of a Sunday she went to church. The dark, creased skirt; the large white apron trimmed with lace; the dark bodice, above it fitting the large white kerchief; later the dark jacket with the tight sleeves; the snow-white, billowy shirt-sleeves; and upon the head a fine freshly-starched "Kommode" (Silesian peasant cap), fastened under the chin with a gay silk ribbon. How much more becoming is this dress than the half-city clothing the peasant-women wear nowadays. For my Muhmchen's age we always had a very childish reckoning—nine years older than the Herr Graf, nine years younger than the Gräfin Mama, born on Candlemas (the second of February); that makes, if I take my father's year of birth for reckoning—this year ninety years—so that my poor little Muhmerle was fifty-seven when I was entrusted to her care. For many years now she has lain fast in bed—not truly ill; but the legs, her legs, refuse service. Thus I always find her when I visit my dear home—quite neat in her bed, close by the little window, with a view upon the village street. Her eyes are deeply sunken, the lids half closed—but else it is still the same dear face, though with every year a good deal more wrinkled. Ever it is said: "The Muhme will not know thee"; and yet she knows my voice at once, and then her joy over her "Cuntessel" is very great—for, "Cuntessel" I have remained despite husband and children. When, before my wedding, I visited her last, she suddenly grew quite still; at last she said in a very soft voice: "Ach, Cuntessel, wenn er sie ock nich zu sehr heipen (hauen) thäte." Whether my orthography in the Silesian dialect be

right, I know not. How the old woman rejoiced when I laid upon her bed a little white bundle—thyself, my little Ewald, four months old—how, trembling, she blessed thy little fair head with her wrinkled hands. Last year thou didst already sit alone upon her bed. She is ever very proud that I have so handsome and clever a man, whom Bismarck sends so far about the world. And she gives me hearty joy when she says: "Nee Cuntessel, Se werden doch der Mama selig immer ähnlicher." Thus every year we take leave of each other for life—and God alone knows whether I shall widen her grave first, or whether her thoughts will seek mine. When I outgrew the nursery, the Muhme became milk-strainer; and when a fall down the steep cellar steps hindered her from further fulfilling her duties, she set herself to rest and dwelt partly for a while with her children, with whom in general she found little joy—partly with a grandchild. Of Sundays after church I went straight to her, and many a dumpling of black flour with dripping gravy have I eaten there, and found it more delicious than a midday meal at a king's table. In those days, to be sure, the village street was not yet paved with the high causeway as now, and splash, splash, I sometimes sank up to the ankles in the mire. And on the way home I then turned in, each time, at the parsonage, where I was a right welcome guest. As I grew older, I stood between Pastor-Mariechen and Pastor-Clärchen, and at first the elder became more my friend—later the younger my more frequent companion. The good Herr Pastor called me ever the "wild bumblebee"—and I deserved the name full well. It was no rare case—so as not to say, it often

happened—that I took the shorter way across the fields from the castle. The last hindrance, the garden fence of the parsonage, was none for me, and in the next instant I was already in the sitting-room. The poor parsonage, sometimes we had surely turned it upside down—there was no place where we did not creep. In later years, when I surprised the good old gentleman in his dressing-gown with the long pipe, he would indeed attempt a flight—yet he always remained at my earnest entreaty. How delicious tasted the little honey or dripping rolls of the Frau Pastorin; and the first fruit of the "Napoleon's butter-pear" did surely stand upon my birthday table. The funeral sermon he could no longer preach for me, but he had chosen the text. We have ever stood faithful by one another, the parsonage folk and I; and I know I was loved like a child of their own. My husband and I stand godparents to Clärchen's children—the dear God has taken the little Martin to Himself—may God bless little Fritz, who surely will become, like father and grandfather, a herald of His word. It was deeply melancholy for me once when, returning from the far South, I found the house fast shut—untenanted. The old apple tree, whose branches reached far over the roof, was gone; the fair fruit trees along the fence broken by the storm; the friendly place desolate and lonely—but in the churchyard two mounds more. Now again merry voices sound through the old house, and the little nieces play again with the pastor's children; but I am drawn no more thither to the haunts of the merry children's games—I have become a stranger where I was almost a child of the house. Yet the swallow

sings, “In the village as of yore,” so runs the folksong. Yea, much is gone and new comes in its stead—and therefore I quickly call forth again the old familiar figures of my youth-time. I was but ten or eleven when he died—the old Seifert, my father’s valet. Five generations of our house had he seen. When, as I believe, a boy of ten—he was of Polish origin—my great-grandfather took him in, he served both him and my grandfather and father; he saw us children grow up, and he still carried my sister’s children in his arms. In my earliest childhood he waited on my father yet as valet, and, I think, still oversaw the table; then this too fell away, and at last he remained wholly in his little room, where he lived like a hermit. I never knew him otherwise than with snow-white hair—a small, thick-set figure with a round, fresh face. I remember quite clearly that, when my mother gave him an errand, he would mutter it half aloud to himself so as not to forget it. I still see him of evenings sitting in my father’s bedchamber, awaiting him—either dozing in the half-round armchair covered with white-and-green-striped chintz, or else here too in a half-audible self-converse. Odd it was that he and the old Friederike were the bitterest enemies—they avoided each other like dog and cat. When we drove out in winter or went to pay visits, there were huge foot-bags into which we children were packed. This business the old Seifert always performed with the greatest conscientiousness, despite our lively resistance. Only the smallest part of the upper body remained visible; and since thereby the use of the feet was taken from us, we were quite simply loaded on as baggage. An excellent portrait

from the hand of our friend V. has preserved to posterity the friendly face of the brave old man. I believe he would for us—above all for his master—have gone blindfold through fire. Such service almost for a lifetime in one house—such fidelity and growing together with one's lord and lady—this is heard of ever less. One most original figure I must not forget to mention, though she does not belong directly to B. This is a little, wretched man, squinting, with a crooked hump, dwelling in the neighboring village of Schö—; he went about from place to place playing the flute and was called "the Suitor." Whether that was truly his name, or what his real name was, I know not. He announced his approach by a prelude before the gate, which was at once answered by the barking and whining of the dogs, who usually rushed to meet him. Then the old Suitor reverently took off his cap before them and parleyed with them. A truce would ensue, and he advanced first to the statues at the gate, then to Hercules on the lawn, then—quite humbly—bowing before the stone lions, he reached the kitchen door, where he took up his post, and now let his plaintive strains and his dances resound. It was ever the selfsame "tulut tulut tulut"—but so unharmonious that it was too much for the dogs' ear-nerves, and they would again break out into a piteous howling. New removing of the cap—new bows—new truce—so it lasted until the silver tribute was paid; and, body and soul refreshed, the little piper withdrew backward toward the gate, for he would have deemed it most unseemly to turn his back upon the lions or upon Hercules—accompanied to the last by the

unartistic dogs. In my childhood these likewise played a great rôle—they were known far and near as formidable warders. Of what race they were I cannot say—one family was more brown than black, another more black than brown; their respective progenitors were, with good reason, called Satan and Satanella. By day they lay mostly on the chain in the so-called dog- or wood-yard, and only the younger, more harmless members of the family walked free about. But if the parent pair once got loose, then all manner of evil things straightway occurred: either they fell upon strange carriages, or bit poor folk, tore their clothes off them—yea, even the servants were not safe from them. Grandmother's little favorite dog, Caroli, they tore before her eyes. In short, to avoid such misfortunes at last a kennel was built. If a carriage drove up, one heard their furious barking from afar, and raging they sprang in their prison hither and thither, showing their white gnashing teeth. After ten o'clock, when all the gates had been carefully shut, they were loosed, and now they stormed like a wild hunt about the castle. If there was a change of night-watch, the new man was introduced to the dogs—I remember this was once forgotten, and the poor newcomer spent a dreadful night atop the high village boundary-stone. If we came home at a late hour, the night-watch gathered the dogs about him; they then sniffed us and recognized us as dwellers of the house. I remember that once they would not let a guest descend from the coach-box, and that even then they could only with the greatest difficulty be called off. New chamber stoves must always be escorted by the night-watch to their quarters in

the kitchen-house. Now this race is extinct, and only a harmless cur accompanies the night-watch. In the neighboring little town one person was quite famous—our old post-woman, Frau Scholenz—in genuine Silesian, however, "the Scholenzin." Whether her twenty-fifth service-jubilee was celebrated I truly do not know. For twenty-two years she surely trudged to and fro; and they calculated that in the course of the years she had run so many miles as would make five times round the equator. In sunshine, in rain, in snow and storm she started at ten in the morning, heavily laden, to return after hard work at six in the evening. In a blue printed cotton gown, black bodice, short shirt-sleeves, gay breastkerchief and apron, the Kommode on her head; above it the huge broad-brimmed straw hat—called the "Kiepe"; barefoot; either with a basket on her back for the post-bag, or pushing a handcart—called the "Radwer"—thus she sped lightly away in summer. In winter a thick dark skirt replaced the blue-printed, thick stockings and shoes, and a closely fitting kerchief-jacket completed the attire; in place of the Kommode, a cap of dark merino lined with fur—therefore called the "Kitschemütze"—most often supported by the straw "Kiepe," which in summer shielded her from the sun's rays, while in winter it replaced the umbrella and kept off rain and snow. With skirts hitched high, the Scholenzin could at any time have been accepted among ballet-dancers. If she appeared in the morning, there was an unending cry for her—"To Figaro"—"From Figaro"—translated into Scholenzin; she could no more be called away. The kitchen had its errands for meat and

other provisions; and not one, no, a thousand errands had every house-inmate. Needles, ribbon, wool, paper bags, beads, silk, books, pens—in short, our Figaro must be firm in every saddle. The finish was formed by the revenue office; I should like to see before me the sums the old Scholenzin has carried to and fro in the well-known black leather bag. I still marvel that never any mishap befell her, for the stretch of wood through which she had to pass was fairly long. But not a mere prosaic errand-woman was the Scholenzin—nay, we called her our postillon d'amour; many a young bride or wife looked for the Scholenzin with longing: how often have I gone to meet her as a bride—though it was in vain, for the post-office was not opened till the revenue office. Very comical it was that the good old thing was downright vexed if once the expected letter failed; and then already from afar she cried, quite indignant: "Well, what can that mean—today I have no letter!"—and then it was for me to find an excuse. If two came the next day, peace was restored. And especially at Christmastide—what mountains of parcels and boxes she then lugged along; at times indeed she got "a lift," but then again the way and weather were so abominable that the boxes were veritable houses. At last even her feet would carry her no more—the first years it gave her no rest, and she ever made new attempts; now she lies almost entirely in bed. None of her successors will ever dim her memory; and we children of the house should verily one day deem a memorial to her well placed. If any of us were in town, as much as possible was naturally taken off the old woman—most of all, one took herself; and I think none of

us ever thought to take her along, though the old woman would have made, with her Kiepe, a strange body-servant. I would that a kindly fairy had given me, as god-gift, my grandfather's talent for painting and drawing—then picture should ever accompany word. But I am a poor owl robbed of every talent, and must only be glad if the reader one day does not laugh at me.

## Lorchen, the Entailed Doll

The Dolls and all manner of Toys.

If I devote a special section to the dolls and to the games, it lies therein that my good mother set the greatest store by them. She always said the play with the doll is for a girl of the greatest importance—therein she learns order and household ways. The chief qualities of woman are thereby formed—mother-love, the dignity of a housewife. How charmingly and how truly Chamisso sings:

> "Mother, mother, my little doll
> I have rocked into sleep!
> Good mother, come and see
> How like an angel she there lies."
>
> Father put me off and said:
> "Go, thou art a foolish child;
> thou, mother only, canst comprehend
> What my joys are."
>
> "As thou with the little children,
> So will I do with her in all things,
> And she shall in her cradle
> Rest beside my bed;

If she sleeps, of her I will be dreaming;
If she cry out, I waken straight.
My heavenly good mother,
O how rich I am indeed!"

My heavenly good mother—so say I too from my whole soul! Not only that through playing with the doll I won a treasure for life—nay, I thereby had also a blissful childhood. How glorious were those games; the whole world vanished round about me—I lived and moved in my doll-world, and—I am not in the least ashamed to say it—that every time when, as a girl of sixteen, I came home from the institute, I played with delight with my nieces' dolls; and even today I have understanding for it and rejoice at the time when I shall teach to play as I myself learned it. Learned to play—aye, must one then learn that? perhaps many a one will say. That is just the very thing—it is not enough to give one's child a splendid doll—no, one must teach it how to deal with it; if this be not done, the fairest doll imaginable will, after a few days, lie neglected in a corner. We had, then, a complete dolls'-household—beds for the little ladies, chairs, washstands, cupboards, commodes, sofas, tables—in short, a complete little furnishing. These things were by no means stately luxury furniture—no, simple serviceable things. For us children the ideal of a doll was Lorchen, or, as she was jestingly called, the Majorat-Doll—because my eldest sister had already possessed her. Really the selfsame doll?—Well, that is naturally saying too much—for since my eldest sister perhaps received her in the year 1840, and

I inherited her in the year ’60, it is in some measure improbable. But it goes with me in this tradition as with many another—one must but have the faith of childhood; for me my Lorchen was just the true old Lorchen, which I held and honored and loved as my highest good. With a heavy heart I parted from her seven years later; for Lorchen is a female fief—and as such passed over to the eldest daughter of my eldest sister—therefore to Lorchen’s first possessor. I had indeed, of course, possessed dolls already before—but the real playing began only with Lorchen. I had yet other dolls beside her, but she was the principal personage—the others but her children, sisters, or maidservants, as the game at the moment brought it with it. As complete as Lorchen’s clothing was, so were the others’ not—Lorchen possessed linen—of every piece a half-dozen—and a rich wardrobe. A great festival it was when I reached the age at which I might wash and iron the dolls’ linen myself—I possessed all the appliances required for it: washing-tubs, pegs, a mangle, ironing-board, and flat-irons. What a delight that was—every month it was inspected, either by my mother or my governess, whether everything were in the best order. I would scarcely ever have gone to bed without having laid my dolls to rest. At about nine years I had really beautiful long hair—at that time fell the wedding of a friend, and as I took part, as pensée, at the “clattering-evening,” my hair had to be transformed into quite small curls. Whether this was the sole reason, or whether my mother deemed it well to shorten the hair and only used this occasion, I truly do not know. In any case

my long hair fell under the hair-artist's shears amid the bitterest tears on my part. I was doubtless already too big for such a measure, for never again did my hair grow so long. At Christmas Lorchen beamed on me with splendid long braids—ah, they were my own sorely lamented hairs, and if I err not, she is still today adorned with them. For my elder sisters my mother had already had folding screens made, about a yard and a half high and perhaps four to five yards long. Here and there were little windows, and in the middle a door. Two such screens we possessed; and it played itself with them delightfully, in that we could shape with them little separate dwellings. If my niece came of a Sunday—Pastor Clärchen, of course, might not be wanting—then was the play so fine that we sometimes forgot eating and drinking for it. The dolls were divided, and we were two families; or we fitted up living- and bed-rooms—in short, ever new fair games were devised. In my sisters' time these screens were used, too, as scenes at improvised theatricals—I well remember such performances. In the great hall—called the picture-hall, to distinguish it from the stone hall—lighted with few lamps and candles—Cinderella, Snow-White, and so forth were presented before an exceedingly grateful public. The latter consisted of the parents, grandmother, the aunts, etc., who were indeed truly entertained thereby. At the close came living pictures. Splendid, too, was the play with the great kitchen. This was a large chest resting on four legs—closed in front by two wings painted as doors. The interior space measures perhaps a yard in length, and correspondingly in breadth and height. On the

back wall are two windows—the walls are painted as though they were stone slabs—the floor prettily painted in black and white, a great chimney under which stands the little iron stove. On the walls laths and pegs for hanging and placing the utensils—little tables and benches—in short, a complete kitchen outfit. Now and then, under the governess's oversight, there was proper cooking—beefsteaks, apple sauce, pancakes, chocolate, creams, and so forth. When the midday meal was ready—ah, how our cheeks glowed—then was the table neatly laid—for I had a most charming white-and-blue service—then the grown-ups were invited, who with noble self-denial really tasted of everything. Naturally no thought might be had of a new game before everything again stood fair and clean, washed, each thing in its place! Sometimes the wardrobe of the doll-ladies required a little renewal. Then I was allowed to seek in the great brown wardrobe for old bits, and how glorious everything seemed to me. How industriously then was sewn—but all tidy and good, else there was scolding. Besides Lorchen I had, as said, yet other dolls—there was little Marie—a truly genuine Nuremberg doll, "a keepsake" from a Swiss journey; then Rosalie, a great wax doll that said "Papa" and "Mama"; then several others still. A doll-baby in a swaddling-cushion was always there—therewith a proper cradle, a great corner-table with pillows upon it—needless to say, swaddling-cords and diapers, as well as milk-bottles, and so on. When Christmastide drew near, then it was: write the wish-list—the longer it was, the better—for though the wishes were not all fulfilled, yet it

gladdened my mother. Once the slip from one of us had turned out quite small, and Mama was quite angry—"A child must have not one—nay, a thousand wishes—else it is no child." To be sure, it must also know that the parents can but fulfill the wishes so far as it is possible for them. One fine day then the whole dolls' room was empty—all the inmates, whether great or small, had disappeared. They had all travelled to the Christ-child, who delivered them over to the doll-doctor for a cure; for be one ever so careful, there were still always some little damages to be healed—there an arm was "caput," or a leg—or a head had a crack—the Christ-child cared for all—but of that I shall tell later. These were the great dolls; then I possessed, however, a house in which the little doll-family dwelt—this doll's-house consisted at first of two rooms, such as one commonly has—walls clad with paper, with windows, and open in front—then the little furniture and the little dolls. At one Christmas there was made out of these two rooms a complete little house consisting of three stories, and two great doors with a real key. On the ground floor the little kitchen, beside it the maid-servants' room; then the sleeping- and living-rooms of the gentlefolk; and right at the top the dancing hall with a little chandelier and a pianoforte. With this little house my niece and I played all too beautifully; to combine the useful with the pleasant we had to speak French with these doll-families—we had written a complete family tree of the Marquise Rambouillet and her family. With most inward joy do I still today remember all these games, which not only awakened a world of thoughts and fancies in our heads,

but also formed a real sense for order and householdness. I have therefore still today the deepest pity for all the little girls who cannot play with dolls—at that time I found it downright contemptible. And Lorchen—the kitchen-house—and the little doll-house exist still today, and can tell of all the blissful hours that I lived through by means of them.

50

## Sundry Matters.

If things in this section should look somewhat motley, it lies therein that I do not wish to grow over-broad in my chatterings. In many respects my elder brothers and sisters had it far better than I—for they were several, whereas I was alone. Perhaps it was thereby that I attached myself with special intimacy to my mother. Thus my brothers and sisters had ponies, grays, and a little carriage—which, though naturally used otherwise too, were yet chiefly intended for the children to ride and drive. For me alone this would not have been worth while; the ponies, to be sure, still existed—but only seldom did it come to pass that I drove with them. The little stallion was really a picture-pretty little horse—how proudly he carried his head, and merrily his long mane fluttered in the wind. It was almost with envy that I listened to the elder brothers and sisters telling of all their adventures—how here or there they had been upset and had carried off a hole in the head, or how the ponies had run away and at full gallop had only been stopped at the stable door. All that I found highly romantic, and, as said, to my greatest regret such things no longer happened; for the good little grays had in the meantime entered upon a more sedate age and had long forgotten these youthful follies. Whether the little stallion died or was shot I truly do not know; certain it is that his little widow, who, because she grew ever whiter, was at last called Snow-White, outlived him long, and still today, as “the countess’s gray,” is used for light work. Brave Snow-White—upon thee, after the lions, I made my

first real riding attempts! When, namely, my elder sisters received saddle-horses, there was for me no hotter wish than likewise to learn to ride. But my good mother would hear nothing of it—so first the sisters' horses were mounted when they returned, and I was allowed to ride them at a walk as far as the stable; later a little trot came of it—the coachman, indeed, led the horse; and as it appeared that I really behaved quite well, I at last received permission to mount Snow-White. That was a festival—a cornflower-blue merino dress from last winter gave a glorious riding-dress; thereto a straw hat and the sisters' cast-off riding-gloves—no king could have been prouder than I. So then the old gray mare was my first steed; and on her broad snow-white back even thou, my Ewald, hast already made, though unwittingly, last summer thy first ride. Frankly said, I was not sorry when the coachman declared that the mare was no longer safe—she stumbled incessantly and the little countess might break neck and legs; for, that ingratitude is the world's reward is an old story. Since then I have mounted many a horse and have followed many a hunt, amid merry horn-blowing, on a fleet full-blood steed; yet to thee alone, thou little white horse, be a word of remembrance given. How pity 'tis that so many old customs by degrees fall asleep. It is not granted me to live in the country—were it the case, I should strive with the utmost zeal to keep alive all those jests which I still remember from my childhood, and of which the youth of today scarce has any inkling. The Summer Sunday—that is to say, Laetare Sunday—I have already lightly named. On that Sunday I always rose very

early, for the first children came, if possible, already at seven o'clock. For those to whom this custom is wholly strange, I will insert that the children of the village and of the hamlets belonging to us came, in the hand little fir-trees decked with gay paper and spangles, singing all manner of verses. The proper sense of these should doubtless be the coming of spring; but as it was, there were all sorts of little songs with senseless text, such as:

"Red roses, red—
The blossom on the stalk;
The gentleman is fair, the gentleman is fair—
The lady is like an angel."

Or:

"The golden string goes round the house;
The fair hostess goes in and out;
She will bethink herself,
And will surely give me something."

And so forth.

On the Saturday the Scholenzin had already brought hundreds of foam-pretzels. These stood in great baskets in the hall and were distributed by me. The children from the farthest places received even one to two pfennigs besides. Thus it often went on till the bells rang for church, and I had scarce time to take my breakfast and to sing my little song myself to parents, grandmother, etc. Then at carnival came the "Schimmelreiter" and the "Speckboy." I see, however, that I have not the calendar quite in my

head—but I hope that I shall be forgiven. What sense each had I am, alas, unable to say; doubtless there lies a deeper meaning at the bottom, but for that a wiser head than mine is needed. The "Schimmelreiter" was, then, a man who sat upon a horse made out of white bed-sheets. He wore a top-hat and made his steed perform all sorts of capers. A man and a woman accompanied him, and the man made it his effort to shoe the two-legged horse—being thereat, of course, thrown, to the highest jubilation of the village youth who followed, and of the servants peeping curiously out of door and window. This performance was accompanied by the village music, while the "Speckboy" bore upon a long fork the slices of bacon that had already been given. I think the people received a thaler and went their way in good cheer. For the servants there was punch and pancakes in the evening. At Easter there prevailed a peculiar custom—and that on the second Easter day—one called it the "deck-head." One had willow-rods plaited five- to sixfold, and with them one hid oneself and might—whoever it was—strike with them; one was also doused with water. This custom has altogether ceased with us, which is not to be regretted. I remember that in the time when my brothers came home for the holidays and brought friends with them, things often went very wild—and that the jest sometimes ended in tears. That this custom was to be a remembrance of the scourging which our Saviour endured is beyond doubt—naturally it degenerated into the profane and thus indeed a rough sport can come of it—so it is best to abolish it. In Silesia and in most provinces generally, however, the custom of the

Easter egg has probably still been preserved. These were hidden with us on Maundy Thursday or on the second Easter day. With us they were mostly real eggs, each provided with the name and with a little playful verse suiting the person. Sugar and chocolate eggs only later became more customary. If all the eggs were happily found, they were beaten with sugar and there was rivalry as to whose egg was best beaten, and then the hoppel-popple was consumed with the greatest relish. At Whitsuntide there were probably no special usages with us, and then comes the festival-less time until the close of the church year. With the first Advent, however, Saint Nicholas (Knecht Ruprecht) and the Christ-Child regularly set in. I know that I always looked toward the evening full of rapture—although I was really a little afraid. We were usually gathered in the cozy living-room when the servant announced, with due gravity, that Knecht Ruprecht and the Christ-Child begged permission to enter. This being granted—hu, how my heart then beat—in came Knecht Ruprecht wrapped in a mighty sheepskin, a huge cudgel in his hand; at his side the Christ-Child in white garments, with a veil before the face and a switch in the hand—and besides both carried little sacks with gingerbread, apples, etc. Now they sang: "From Heaven above to earth I come," and such. At the end the Christ-Child said, in a somewhat hoarser voice that was meant to sound fine and heavenly: "If the children be not diligent in praying and singing—then will the switch—go skipping round." Since the missing expression is somewhat drastic, I let him pass over it. And now we had to jump over the cudgel, or the

rod came—sometimes one balked in jest, and then the rod was applied quite in earnest. Even the good father himself jumped over the cudgel; only mother and grandmother remained seated. After the silver handshake had taken place, the Christkind took its leave, and now we went to the kitchen-house, from which soon a loud racket came over—for there the rod played the leading part. Often we children were allowed to dress up as the Christkind, and then the Scholenzen would bring sugar buns for it—if good acquaintances were present, they would at times assume the part of Knecht Ruprecht, and then it sometimes went through the whole castle, up the stairs, down the stairs—until the parents had to put a stop to it, lest it become altogether too rough.

To Christmastide there belonged yet something that I loved exceedingly—I think too in part because thereby I had one or two mornings no school—that was the sausage-making and baking before Christmas. I believe that nowadays in the fewest houses it is directed by the mistress herself. To my good mother it would verily have seemed inconceivable not to have presided over everything. Before Christmas two pigs were always slaughtered, and then there was indeed stout work to be done. The schoolroom—that is to say, governess and pupil—were then allowed to help; for in those days there were as yet no meat-machines, and in the great household-room there was a brisk life and stir. Each had a neat white apron tied on, and now it was: lay to with a will. At eleven o'clock the first "well-wurst" was ready—still today it tastes to me in thought right

splendid—then a little pause was made—each got his little sausage and with it a glass of Gilka; the servants had sausage-soup and likewise fresh sausage—and soon the village poor appeared with their little pots, to whom the remaining sausage-soup was dealt out. What laughter and jesting went on at the work—outside lay the white, in the fair winter sun gloriously glittering snow—and there I could run to and fro so often; I scarce perceived that it was several degrees of frost. And what glorious "Strietzel" (Christmas loaves) they were that my good mother made—raisin and poppy Strietzel—so good have I never eaten them again. And they were not few that were baked; for the servants there were a good twenty pieces—and then for us too—for now at Christmastide the house was never empty. A great winter pleasure was the ice-bench—in truth a feast upon the ice, sometimes by day, though I remember too that it was held in the evening, when the pond was illumined with pitch-torches and colored lamps. In the midst of the pond a stake was driven in, to this two long poles were fastened. Before the last there came a long garden-bench, which was bound fast thereunto. The pond was swept to a nicety—close by the stake stood several men, who, as soon as the bench was filled, moved the poles in a circle. With very whirlwind-speed the bench flew over the smooth surface and one almost lost one's breath. It even happened now and then that, if one had taken the last seat and was not heedful, one was shot clean out. While one part thus took its pastime, the other ran on skates—or was driven in a little chair-sledge, to the merry jingle of the sleigh-bells

that waked the company to the homeward drive. These ice-feasts came, however, at most twice in a winter—our dear steward H. it was who first introduced them, and therein too he ever played the maître de plaisir. Ah yes, it was a fair, blissful time!

## The 21st of May—Birthdays and Feasts in General.

The 21st of May was for us all a chief festival—it was the birthday of my good father. Just as little as my mother liked it when, outside the family, anyone came upon her birthday—the 5th of June—so gladly would my father have the house right full on the 21st of May. Weeks beforehand preparations for the 21st were already made; for my good mother ever had some new pretty surprise wherewith she rejoiced my father. Soon in the garden a rock-group would be erected—in whose midst stood a little tower which should represent the remains of the ancestral castle lying in Thuringia, and at the same time make the dwelling of the owl that my father used for the crow-hut. Then we children were costumed—one crept out from beneath the little bridge as a gnome and told of the gray foretime and the ancestors, while the other, as page of the castle, banner in hand, delivered with solemn words the keys of the castle. Another time it was a fair tent—or a belvedere on the garden wall—or a new hunting-carriage, which drove up under merry blare of horns with a jovial hunters' company—in short, the inventive loving spirit of my mother was never weary of devising anew. Of evenings most commonly there was a play acted or living pictures were shown; for which, in one of the no longer used glasshouses, a little permanent stage had been erected. For all these preparations it sufficed that my mother said: "August, do not go near such and such a spot"—and no power on earth could have prevailed on my father not to comply with that injunction to the very letter.

Already at early morning the military band of the neighboring garrison-town O… brought a serenade; on the preceding days guests had already arrived, so that there was quite a large circle that brought at the breakfast-table the truest wishes to the dear father. That the "streusel-cake" was not missing is a matter of course—it is, after all, a Silesian national dish. If the married brothers and sisters were not already there—then one surely soon heard their carriages driving up—that the grandchildren might not fail is understood—then came the officials with their formal congratulations—wine and cake went round—then the "first gifts"—the long mid-day table—at which the golden goblet adorned with Roman coins went round, and one drank the health of the birthday child—"Mother and Grandmother, long life"—and the stone hall resounded with enthusiastic cheers—and "hoch!" and again and yet again "hoch!"—and then toasts were drunk again, and the glad festal mood had reached its height. Scarcely had one in some measure recovered when already the first carriages rolled up—and this lasted till the sixth hour—for on that day the house was open, and from the three neighboring districts acquaintances came to wish happiness to my universally loved and honored father. Thus often there were eighty to a hundred persons together—and the housewife had to provide a proper evening-collation, at which, of course, there was again no lack of formal and jocose speeches. Between times came the theatrical performances—a cheerful dance in the picture hall, light as bright as day—and to close, commonly a fireworks arranged by the officials. How well

I remember the last 21st of May spent at home. I arrived by night from the institute, and had used the time in the railway to learn a long poem. Here I must insert that my grandfather had at a point in the wood—therefore called the "Three-Ladies' Stone"—set up beneath an oak a stone, in memory that there at one time were found together three Countesses K.—a widowed, a, so to say, regnant, and a future lady of the castle. This case had now recurred; and so on this 21st of May at a splendid oak—the so-called "Papa's Place"—now all that is pheasantry—a second stone was set, in memory that again three Countesses K.—Grandmother, Mother, and my sister-in-law—had been united there. I had to relate this occurrence as Genius of the Wood and consecrate the stone. I know it yet as today, it was a glorious spring day—the earth shone in tender fresh dewy green, the birds twittered their love-songs, and young and old had come in festal array—the officials, half the village was afoot—and the old oak bowed its crown and whispered softly with its boughs as though it too would bid welcome. They all—the four honored ones—the lord of the castle and the three ladies of entail—they have long rested in the cool grave, and many a decade will pass ere again at that spot three Countesses K. shall stand. And she who now is a young fair lady of the castle, she must then, as grandmother, take the seat of honor with silver hair, encompassed by grandsons and granddaughters. Even as the 21st of May, no birthday of course was kept that way; my mother's quite quietly—and for Grandmother we had to learn poems. On one's own birthday, and on that of the brothers

and sisters, we never had lessons. The moment of the presents was ever in a kind of way solemn. The bedchamber door of the birthday child received a garland, and a like one adorned the birthday table, in whose midst the life-light, likewise decked with flowers, burned. Now the parents rang—and then there were naught but fair and useful things; at the midday meal the health of the birthday child was drunk from the golden goblet. My good mother was never happier than when she could give others pleasure; she herself possessed a charming gift for verse, and so it was she who made all the lines for our performances and drilled us in them. On the clattering-evening of my eldest sister, which was kept just as can be done only in the country, the house was open, and so many guests came that the carriages could not all be unharnessed, but formed under the lindens a regular wagon-fort, and that neither my parents nor the bridal pair could afterwards remember who all had been present. My brother-in-law says even today that never again, as on that evening, had he hungered so sore; for the bridal pair, out of sheer love, were not suffered to come to eating. I was about three and a half years old, and had to say a poem as Cupid in winged dress. I am still teased with it today—that I, when I could get no farther in the middle, with the greatest composure stepped to the edge of the stage and said: “Mama, how goes it farther?” A high gentleman who honored the feast with his presence said: that had been the prettiest thing of all. Of another very pretty masked ball I remember—as I was a half-grown schoolgirl. I will not describe the ball itself, only its particulars. Thus the whole

castle court was lit as bright as day with pitch-torches and colored lamps—likewise the great lime-tree avenue, so that many of the guests at a distance thought the castle was on fire. At the door stood, as porter, a huge Moor (disguised, of course)—on the stair-landing two gnomes—at the top of the stair two Chinese, who must sit in the posture of the pagodas and nod with their heads. The hall doors were again opened by two Moors—my parents wore neither masks nor dominoes—a very successful mask was that of my grandfather (on my mother's side) who was costumed as Old Fritz. It was charming that the Breslau cuirassiers did him the honors—they had by chance chosen the dress of the first cuirassiers under Frederick the Great—I myself was suitably clad as vivandière. At the tea-table my governess presided as a Chinese lady. All these jests my good mother had devised; and for her elastic spirit there were not soon insuperable hindrances.

## Christmas

The dear Christmas festival shall have a section of its own—for to us children it was the fairest thing we could conceive; indeed it is to the dear Christmas that I owe that I set down these memories of a blissful childhood. For months we rejoiced toward it—and for months beforehand my mother made provision; for else she could never have compassed what our Christmas feast was. It was not a mere buying up and heaping together of things to discharge a duty—no, everything, even the very least, was devised and found with love. Each, be he great or small, old or young, must write his wish-list—aye, even the servants. Then came a delicious time full of secrecy—the picture hall was closed, in two guest chambers the seamstresses established themselves, and the Scholenzin daily brought whole mountains of chests and parcels. Commonly my mother drove twice to Breslau; the last time—for there was then as yet no railway—a great waggon accompanied her, which then returned home heavily laden. Once we, when we were bigger, were allowed to go too, and received a small sum for our purchases; then of course we made a little task for each member of the household. It was my good mother's highest joy to make us right curious—things were tried on us with our eyes bandaged—even Grandmama's—and that we might not feel the stuff, we had to put on thick gloves. At Christmas the winter wardrobe was renewed; until then one had to make do with what one had. But the housewife thought not only of us. On one evening all the old articles

of clothing were brought in; then the great list was taken out and now these things were distributed. The household folk received the better clothes, and then came the poor, for whom there was always appointed a fixed number of new warm articles to be made. The last purchases of gingerbread and the like were made in the little neighboring town. The evenings before Christmas were altogether too fair—each one worked so busily that his cheeks glowed—my good father was often over with Oek. J., who with his wife also came over several times in the week. The nearer holy eve approached, the busier became the work; how the poor Scholenzin was beset when evening came. Already on the 23rd the gardener was all day employed in the picture hall—that it might be right bright, Mother had lightly framed trellises set up everywhere and clothed with green fir-sprays, to which lights were fastened.

Those who received clothing had behind their tables likewise green trellises on which the stuffs—or whatever it might be—were fastened. The chief forester himself chose the fairest tree, which stood upon a white-covered table in the midst of the hall. Already one or two days before it was adorned—I believe I was already quite a big grown “backfish” when I was first allowed to help fasten all the pretty things upon it. What an immeasurable store of good things there was, what bewitching figures of chocolate, sugar, and marzipan. It always took several hours before all was tied on and the lights were fixed. On Christmas Eve itself one scarcely saw our good

mother—shut in the picture hall with a few adjutants; ah, it was too beautiful, to hear through the closed doors how it rustled within—or tinkled; and every sound rang mysterious and stirred one's curiosity. But we, too, had much to do—that forenoon was the distribution for the village poor—on the big bailiff's room lay all the things; their owners were called up and, with tears of joy in their eyes, went away laden toward the farmstead, where they were afterwards gifted besides with flour, meat, potatoes, etc. When this was over, the children's distribution came next. The tree for the children and that for the household folk we were allowed to trim by ourselves. The children received toys, books, slates and writing materials, and their aprons were full of meal-wasps—a glorious kind of gingerbread which, I believe, is known only in Silesia—apples and nuts.

The servants and the coachmen's children received the tree itself. After vespers the household folk came in their turn. For them the Christmas tree stood upon an enormously long table in the stone hall. At the head sat the housekeeper, and then according to rank and standing. At every place the wax-taper and the great brown gingerbread—as well as the Strietzel; then the gifts; on top my father himself laid the white cover, inscribed with the name and with the sounding contents. At the distribution my mother appeared for a moment; clang, clang went the bell, and in thronged the people, Sunday-dressed—each one's place was shown to him, and soon joy was painted on all faces, although respect naturally hindered a loud

outburst thereof. Now came the hand-kissing, and each was allowed to take his portion. At the exit there stood mighty wash-baskets, filled to the brim with apples, nuts, and gingerbread—in a short time they were wholly emptied. And now came the great moment when we too received our gifts; for one can indeed first rejoice most when one has gotten, from the joy of others, a foretaste of one's own joy. Meanwhile all the brothers and sisters had come, the house was full, and in the drawing-room the impatiently waiting great and small assembled. Again and again one ran to the door—the tree is not yet burning—but now the last things have come with the Scholenzin, now our mother draws on her white dress as the Christ-child—now the smell of the Christmas candles already steals through the door—now the bell sounds, and—ah—there— the folding doors fly open—and a sea of light, a shimmer and glitter, streams toward us—so that one almost has to close one's eyes. And everywhere at once was the good mother—here leading Grandmother to her table—there setting children and grandchildren in order. What a motley sight, a veritable Christmas fair! The parents' tables—for Mother's table we had adorned outside, and it was set in its place only at the very moment when the door was opened—Grandmother's, Aunt's, displayed naught but fine, solid things; then those of the married brothers and sisters—here a little miniature carriage, there a horse in lieu of the great real specimens; in the middle of the hall a huge garden-tent; for the ladies, articles of luxury, a costly fur or trinkets—apart from the countless small things that covered the table; then the

tables of the sisters fit for the ball—offering a whole choice of fragrant toilettes, fabrics shot with gold, and between them floated delicate rosy clouds—flowers and wreaths; and then the tables of the younger ones—here a new winter suit, a jaunty little fur-cap, skates, books; then the dolls—now the famous Lorchen sat as a bold amazon high on horseback—now she was a proud ball-lady fanning herself—or a bride in rustling silk, adorned with wreath and veil; there, in the cradle, a red-cheeked wax baby; and then the dolls' houses; and now, indeed, the tables of the little grandchildren—the rocking-horse, the jumping-jack, the trumpets! - What a blessed confusion, what shouting; things—here a trumpet is set to the laughing child's mouth—there a hunting-horn is blown by all the rules of art—or a hurdy-gurdy lets one of its little pieces be heard—while from a new harmonium melancholy tunes are drawn forth—there a little doll is held tenderly in the arm and the rocking-horse is moved merrily to and fro—here the crack of a whip; yonder before the mirror a new article of clothing is tried on in haste, while another would already like to lose himself in a long-desired new book. Everywhere blissful faces, the cheeks glow with delight, the eyes shine—but none is so blissful as the Christ-child, none looks so as does the beloved mother. This is indeed the day toward which she has so long looked—and now her long toil and pains are crowned—and she looks only upon happily shining faces. And the hall, the dear old hall, how stately and festal it looks—three rows—in the middle the tree streaming with light, and the chandeliers, and every table lit anew with

lamps and candles—in short, a very sea of lights; ah, and the delicious Christmas scent—I close my eyes—how plainly I see it all before me—the painted gods of ancient Greece seem to warm themselves in their niches; for many, many years have they seen on every Christmas eve the merry troop of children, have seen how the little ones grew to be great, how they now lead their own little ones by the hand; they have seen the fair blond hair of the parents darken in the course of years—have seen light silvery threads steal into it. And through the lofty windows streams the sea of light, illuminating the white snow-covering without; the boughs of the old firs hang heavily down, laden deep with snow—and the tree-crowns bow and bend that they too may cast a glance within upon all the splendor, that they too may have a share in the blissful festal joy. And light after light burns down and dies away, ever farther sounds the merry laughter, ever darker it grows—and I awake—yea, have I then been dreaming—is it over, the merry, the blissful time of childhood?

## Conclusion

Yes, it is past; but a new blissful time hath begun—for with one's own children one becometh a child anew. For one's own children—yea: when last year, in fair Sweden, I began to set down these memories, thou, my little Ewald, didst trip merrily through the rooms; and behind the blue curtain, in the white little bed, thy little sister lay. For you twain were they meant, these memories; and I dreamed of the time when thou, a wild stripling, wouldst be led by the gentle hand of the sister. But the dear God, who alone knoweth what is best for us, took thy sweet little sister back to Himself. For ever are the great dark eyes closed that looked so questioning out into the world; and the little mound in the far North which archeth itself over her earthly shell is all that in later years shall remain to thee in remembrance of thy little sister. Therefore the foreword shall remain the same; for with right may I say also, at the close: "For my children." Hath not the dear God given thee a dear little brother—a comforting little angel—for the darling that hath departed?

Therefore I say: to you, my children, have I set down these youthful memories. May you one day remember your mother in like faithful, thankful love as I remember her who guided my first steps—my mother—to whom in most tender filial love I dedicate these leaves.

## About the Authoress

Countess Leonie von Kleist, née Countess Kospoth, daughter of the holder of the entail, Count August Kospoth (1803–1874), and of Charlotte, née von Necker (1812–1872), was born on 12 September 1851 at Schön-Briese, district of Oels. On 22 October 1879 she married Friedrich Wilhelm von Kleist of the house of Wendisch Tychow, who was in the diplomatic service. Shortly after the marriage he was transferred as Legation Councillor to the Legation at Lisbon. After further diplomatic posts, which led him to the Legation in Stockholm and to the Prussian Legation in Stuttgart, Friedrich Wilhelm received appointment as Minister Resident at Caracas in Venezuela. Upon his father's death he inherited, together with the estate of Wendisch Tychow, the comital title; in 1894 he received his discharge from the diplomatic service in order to take over the paternal property. Leonie von Kleist was a woman of many gifts and energy, who knew how to support her husband in his profession. She spoke, among other languages, fluent French and English, and made her home, at home and abroad, a centre of social life. She described her childhood in 1887 in "O love, so long as thou canst love!" Of the time spent abroad she published in 1906 "Memories from North, South, East, West." Of the marriage there were four sons: Ewald, Sigurd, Gunnar, and Diether-Dennies. The daughter Edeltraut died very young. She died on 27 February 1927 at Wendisch Tychow.

Leonie von Kleist

Countess Kospoth

Count Kospoth

## The Grandparents

Count August von Kospoth

Countess Julie von Kospoth

Castle Briese