

The Tutor (1950)

By Bertolt Brecht

*An adaption of
Jakob Michael Reinhold Lenz's play*

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CHARACTERS

HASTY, a tutor
PASTOR HASTY, his father
PRIVY COUNCILLOR VON BERG
FRITZ, his son
MAJOR VON BERG
MRS. VON BERG, his wife
GUSSIE, their daughter
LEOPOLD, their son
THE VON BERGS' MAID
WENCESLAS, a village
schoolmaster

LISA, his ward
COUNT VERMOUTH
SQUINT and BUTTRESS, students
MRS. BLITZ, a landlady
MISS SWANDOWN
CAROLINE SQUINT
MISS COTTON
MISS MILLER
MISS GOSLING

Prologue

In which the tutor introduces himself to the audience.

Ladies and gentlemen, the play you're about to see
Was written in the eighteenth century.
A household tutor is the part I play
Ancestor of our teachers of today.
I'm still a servant of the nobility
Teaching their offspring for a meager fee
A little manners, the Bible more fully
And how to sneer and sham and bully.
I myself, though I've had a higher education
Am and remain of humble station.
Of course the times have been changing of late
The middle class is rising in the state.
Unless I read the portents wrong
I'll be serving it before too long.
Adept at toeing any line
I'm sure that I will suit it fine.
With all their trimming, clipping, drilling
Those nobles made me only too willing
To teach what suits the ruling class—
A habit that will never pass.
But what I really do, you'll see
Is spell out the sorry state of Germany.

ACT ONE

1

Insterburg in Prussia. Outside Privy Councillor von Berg's ornamental garden.

Privy councillor. Major.

MAJOR Things aren't doing too well at the farm, William. No horses to be had, not for love nor money. Zounds! The country still hasn't recovered from the war—seven years of it.—There comes that starveling again, I can't take a step without running into him.

(Hasty passes, bowing and scraping four times. His greetings are not acknowledged)

HASTY Oafs! The devil take you!

PRIVY COUNCILLOR Who's that lickspittle?

MAJOR They tell me his name is Hasty, a pastor's son. My wife asked him to call, she needs a tutor for Leopold; I suppose he'll do as well as anyone.

PRIVY COUNCILLOR I remember that name. His father's been pestering me to do something for him. He wanted a position at the town school. But he's not trained for it. His father's purse gave out before his finals. What is he to teach your son?

MAJOR Drum a little knowledge and good manners into him, so he can grow up to be a soldier like me.

PRIVY COUNCILLOR He may be good enough for that, Frederick.
(He enters the garden, preceding the major, and stops in front of a plant) Farra communis, the common fern, oldest plant on earth.—But tell me, brother, about this Hasty, do you know

what sort of man you'll be taking into your house? What about his ethical maturity? My own inquiries have not been too thorough. I haven't looked into his past.

MAJOR All I know is that he's not overcharging. And what with the war and the high cost of living . . .

PRIVY COUNCILLOR I wouldn't want anything cheap. That's why I'm sending my boy Fritz to the university in Halle.

MAJOR 'Sblood! Enough about that lout. We were talking about your fern here.

PRIVY COUNCILLOR The fern whose remote ancestor, the horsetail, can be traced back to the ice age . . .

2

Gussie's room.

Gussie. Fritz von Berg.

GUSSIE Fritz! How far is Halle?

FRITZ Three hundred miles or three miles—as you like. If I can't stay here, Gussie, and you're unattainable in any case, what difference is there between three miles and three hundred?

GUSSIE And you'll be in Halle and . . .

FRITZ With you heart and soul! But you won't write to me and I shall cease to exist.

GUSSIE Then you think it won't be a separation when you get into the coach, not a real separation?

FRITZ We'll always be together in spirit. Take this, Gussie! (*He gives her Klopstock's Odes*)

GUSSIE Klopstock! (*Reads*)

"The drunken joy of the long wept-for,
Almost too blissful hour
Which tells the lover that he is loved!"

FRITZ (*continues*)

"And now two beauteous souls, ennobled, feel
Wholly, for the first time wholly, the fullness of their being!"

Oh!—But Uncle will marry you off to that ungodly Count
Vermouth long before I take my degree. My three years at the
university will be a long time in your life!

GUSSIE Three years or thirty, as you like.—I hear my father
and my uncle in the hall. Let's go out into the garden.

FRITZ No, they're gone. But I'll come back. Wait, Gussie, read
just this: "Hermann and Thusnelda." The return of the
Cheruscan.

GUSSIE (*reads*)

"Ah, there he comes, covered with sweat, with
Roman blood and the dust of battles. Never was
Hermann so beautiful! Never did such flames
Flash from his eyes.

Come, I tremble with desire, hand me the eagle
And thy blood-drenched sword! Come, breathe here and rest
In my embrace
From the too terrible battle."

Wait, let's go out to the summer-house.

FRITZ No, no, Papa's outside. Go on reading.

GUSSIE (*reads*)

"Rest here that I may wipe the sweat from thy brow
And from thy cheek the blood. Thy cheek's on fire!
Hermann, Hermann, never before
Has Thusnelda loved thee so!"

Oh, Fritz!

"Not even when first in the shade of the oak thou
Seizedst me impetuously in thy tawny arms!

Fleeing I stayed and saw upon thee
The mark of immortality."

FRITZ Gussie . . .

GUSSIE Would you—no, I mustn't ask you.

FRITZ Ask for my life, for my last drop of blood.

GUSSIE We were going to swear an oath together.

FRITZ Yes, let us. Magnificent. Let us kneel down here beside the bed. You raise your finger like this and I raise mine.—Tell me now, what shall I swear to you?

GUSSIE That you'll always fly to the arms of your Gussie at holiday time and come back from the university in three years and make Gussie your wife, no matter what your father says.

FRITZ And what will you promise in return, my angelic . . .
(*Kisses her*)

GUSSIE I swear that I will never, never marry anyone but you, not even if the Tsar of Russia himself should come and ask me.

FRITZ I swear a thousand oaths—

(*The privy councillor comes in: both jump up with loud screams*)

PRIVY COUNCILLOR Make a clean breast of it. What have you two been up to? For shame, I thought I had a sensible son. You want to study law, and you can't even teach yourself how to behave? Come here, both of you. I choose to see no wrong. If you like to be with your cousin, Fritz, I have no objection, but now it's off to Halle with you to become a beacon to humanity. To make yourself worthy of her. And to learn the meaning of true freedom. Which distinguishes man from the animals. Stallions and mares have to do it, but human beings are free not to. Understand, son? (*Fritz nods shamefacedly*) Consequently I want you to take leave of each other at once, without constraint, pursuant to your better judgment, voluntarily. No letters to be exchanged, except unsealed. Promise? (*Fritz and Gussie nod*) Thoughts are free, but writing will be censored. Now, say good-bye in my presence—and refrain of your own free will from doing anything that cannot be done in the presence of witnesses. (*Fritz makes a bow to Gussie, she curtsies to Fritz*) Yes, children, reason is a hard taskmaster.

3

Mrs. von Berg's parlor.

Mrs. von Berg at the spinet, Hasty stands beside her in a deferential attitude, Leopold stands catching flies.

MRS. VON BERG I've spoken to your father; he suggested a salary of three hundred ducats and we've settled on a hundred and fifty. In return I must ask you, Mr.—what was the name?—Mr. Hasty, to keep yourself in clean clothes and not to disgrace our house. As to your daily schedule, you will take your chocolate at seven with the young master and see to it that he eats properly; his health is delicate. School from eight to twelve. Afternoon: a walk in the public park and be sure never to let go of his hand, he's a very spirited boy. From six until dinner time you may sit by the bay window and pursue your own studies. In the evenings I shall expect you to entertain our guests. I trust you've got a tongue in your head. I expect you to show good taste and to be honorable as well. The last tutor had to be dismissed for stuffing his pockets with pears.—Do you skate? Could you teach Leopold?—And are you proficient in dancing?

HASTY I hope your ladyship will be pleased with me. In Leipzig I never missed a ball, I must have had at least five dancing masters.

MRS. VON BERG Indeed? Won't you show me? A figure from the minuet. Make me a *compliment*. Don't be nervous, Mr. . . . Hasty. Don't be nervous! My son hates books as it is; if his tutor turns out to be a simpleton, that will be the end of him. Just to give me an idea.—Well, well, not bad. Now, if you please, a *pas*.—You'll do. You'll get into the spirit once you've attended one of our soirées . . . Are you a musician?

HASTY I play the violin and I can get by on the spinet.

MRS. VON BERG Splendid! I've always had to sing for the dear children when they wanted to dance. That will be a great improvement.

HASTY Your ladyship, you overwhelm me. Is there any virtuoso in the whole world who would dare match his instrument against your ladyship's voice?

MRS. VON BERG Ha, ha, ha, you haven't even heard me yet
Wait, do you know this minuet? (*She sings*)

HASTY Ah . . . Ah . . . You must forgive my enthusiasm. (*Kisses her hand*)

MRS. VON BERG I happen to be enrhumée, I'm sure I sound like a crow. Vous parlez français, sans doute?

HASTY Un peu, madame.

MRS. VON BERG Avez-vous déjà fait votre tour de France?

HASTY Non, madame . . . Oui, madame . . .

MRS. VON BERG Vous devez donc savoir, qu'en France on ne baise pas les mains, mon cher . . .

MAID (*enters*) Count Vermouth.

MRS. VON BERG One of my daughter's suitors . . .

(*Count Vermouth enters. After a few silent bows he sits down on the sofa*)

COUNT VERMOUTH Has your ladyship seen the new dancing master who just arrived from Dresden? A marchese from Florence, by the name of . . . In all my travels I have only seen two who might have been compared to him.

MRS. VON BERG Only two? You do arouse my curiosity. I know what exquisite taste Count Vermouth has.

HASTY Pintinello . . . , isn't it? I saw him dance at the theater in Leipzig. With no great distinction . . .

COUNT VERMOUTH He dances—on ne peut pas mieux.—As I was saying, your ladyship, in Petersburg I saw Beluzzi, who may have been better. But this one has a nimbleness in his feet, there's something so free, so divinely negligent about his stance, his arms, his turns—

HASTY Last time he appeared at Koch's Theater, they booed him.

MRS. VON BERG Be advised, my friend, that domestics do not intervene in conversations between persons of quality. Go to your room. Who asked your opinion?

(Hasty goes toward the door)

COUNT VERMOUTH The new tutor, I presume?

MRS. VON BERG Fresh from the university.—Off with you! Don't you hear you're being talked about? All the less reason to stand there listening.

(Hasty goes out. Mrs. von Berg and Count Vermouth take their chocolate)

MRS. VON BERG It's intolerable that one can no longer get the right kind of person for one's money. Think of it. Five hundred ducats a year! Isn't it dreadful?

COUNT VERMOUTH As I was saying, this Pintinello dances like a god. My passion for the dance has cost me some thirty thousand ducats, but I'd gladly pay twice as much if . . . *(He sighs)* How is Mademoiselle Gussie?

MRS. VON BERG So, so, la la. She's been looking a bit pale these last few days.

4

At the skating rink.

Miss Cotton, Miss Gosling, and Miss Miller, skating. To one side Hasty is giving Leopold a skating lesson.

MISS MILLER I love listening to Pastor Detzer. Those passages in his sermons.

MISS COTTON About sinning in secret!

MISS MILLER He's a thunderer, but only by allusion. *(Imitating him)* "You think no one sees it, no one is present, it can never come to light. But I say unto you, the devil lies in wait for those that eat of the fruit in secret."

MISS GOSLING There's the new one. He's doing figure eights! *(Hasty skates past)*

MISS MILLER You mean him? He's the new tutor at Major Berg's. Don't stare!

- MISS COTTON He's wondering whether to greet us.
- MISS GOSLING He's a fine, upstanding fellow.
- MISS MILLER So they say.
- MISS COTTON Who says? Don't be oracular, Miller.
- MISS MILLER All right, go over to him, let him greet you. I say no more.
- MISS GOSLING Shall we skate past him or . . .
- MISS COTTON I'm for it. (*They skate past Hasty*)
- MISS GOSLING (*nose in the air*) Methinks there's a whiff of snow in the air.
- MISS COTTON (*bursts out laughing*) Why not ask your tutor when it's going to thaw?
- MISS MILLER That's enough now. Don't be childish. I don't want him to join us. Before long he'll be as notorious as a yellow dog.
- MISS COTTON How so?
- MISS MILLER Last Sunday he tried to make up to that Beck girl. But she didn't let him, and she's not choosy, far from it, the hussy! (*They whisper together*)
- MISS GOSLING But what is he to do if no decent girl will go near him?
- MISS COTTON If one of us were seen with him, everyone would know it wasn't just for fun.
- MISS MILLER When you go with Hans next door, no one says a word. He may be a whoremaster, but he's not a stranger. But a stranger—why on earth would you want to go with him? Just drinking a cup of chocolate with somebody like that would ruin your reputation in Instербург for the rest of your life.
- MISS COTTON Here he comes.
(*Hasty, without Leopold, has followed them and now doffs his hat. They stand stiffly without acknowledging his salutation*)
- MISS MILLER There. Now he knows where he stands.
- MISS COTTON 'Tis a pity. There aren't many like him in these parts.
(*Hasty has angrily skated back to Leopold who pulls him to the ground by his clumsiness. The young ladies laugh*)

5

Hasty's Room.

Hasty, writing "agricola" on the blackboard. Leopold at his desk.

LEOPOLD (*reads, with incorrect stress*) —cola.

HASTY (*loathingly correcting the stress*) Agricola.

(*The major walks in*)

THE MAJOR (*reads, with wrong stress*) Agricola. That's fine, that's the way I like it. Busy, busy—and if the rascal doesn't get it, Mr. Hasty, just hit him on the head with the book till he forgets how to get up. Look at him now—making faces again. So touchy when your father speaks to you. I'll make a man of you yet, if I have to whip you till your guts split open, you little sneak! And you, sir, keep after him. I demand it. This essay about the Hero-King that I've been reading is rather sloppy, I should say. The list of his enemies is incomplete. He defied not only the Saxons, the Austrians, the French, and the Russians, he also addressed the British in no uncertain terms. If you leave them out, it's not clear that he was on the brink of disaster—and then the glory doesn't come through.

HASTY I beg your pardon, major. I am at fault. I didn't paint the picture black enough.

MAJOR Are you pulling my leg? Or shielding this little sneak? —Let's see if he knows his Cornelio. Back straight, boy! Chin up! (*He straightens him*) Egad, get your head out of your shoulders or I'll break every bone in your body.

HASTY Beg your pardon, major, but he hardly knows any Latin.

MAJOR What? Has the little rascal forgotten it all? The last tutor told me his Latin was perfect, perfect . . . I'll beat the stuffing out of you (*boxes him on the ear*)—and now you're doubled up again like a question mark. He simply never lis-

tens—go away, out of my sight, leave the room! I'll teach you to shake a leg. Out, I say! (*He stamps his foot, Leopold goes out. The major sits down on Leopold's chair. To Hasty*) Sit down, Mr. Hasty. I wanted a word with you, that's why I sent the boy away. Sit down, all the way! Egad, you'll break the chair if you keep teetering on the edge . . . A chair is for sitting on. Don't you even know that after all your travels?—Now, listen. I regard you as a clean-cut, decent young man, God-fearing and obedient. Otherwise I wouldn't do what I'm doing for you. I promised you a hundred and forty ducats, did I not?

HASTY A hundred and fifty, major.

MAJOR A hundred and forty.

HASTY But with your gracious permission, major, her ladyship promised me a hundred and fifty ducats.

MAJOR Pshaw! What do women know? A hundred and forty ducats, that would come to three—let's see now—three times a hundred and forty, how much is that?

HASTY Four hundred and twenty.

MAJOR Are you sure? Really, as much as that? Very well, to round it out, I'm setting your salary at four hundred Prussian thalers. Egad, that's more than I get from my land. Four hundred thalers.

HASTY But a hundred and fifty ducats equal exactly four hundred and fifty thalers, and those were the terms I agreed to.

MAJOR Four hundred thalers, monsieur. In good conscience you really can't ask for more. Your predecessor was as happy as a lark with two hundred and fifty. And, upon my soul, he was a learned man. You have a long way to go before you can hold a candle to him. I'm only doing this out of friendship for your father, and for your own sake too, of course, if you work hard.—Now, listen: I have a daughter. She knows her Christianity inside out, but you see she's coming up for communion soon, and you know what our pastors are like, so I want you to do a bit of Christianity with her every morning.

HASTY Yes, major.

MAJOR I'm paying you four hundred, and that includes religion for my daughter. An hour every morning; you'll go to her room.

HASTY Yes, major.

MAJOR Properly dressed, if you please; not like the young swine we once had here who insisted on coming to table in his dressing-gown. None of that, eh? Do we understand each other?

HASTY Major, would it be too bold of me to make a most humble request—in connection with your last proposition and in view of the fact that it's difficult for me to meet people and make friends in Insterburg and that living in a big city has become almost a habit with me, because city people are not so standoffish toward strangers . . .

MAJOR Come to the point!

HASTY If once every three months, no more, I might be granted the use of a horse to ride to Königsberg for two or three days? . . .

MAJOR Hm. That might be considered.

HASTY (*jumps up and makes several bows*) Oh, most gracious major—

MAJOR Anyhow it can't be until spring. It's an impossible ride in this winter weather.—Can you draw too?

HASTY A little, your worship.—May I show you a few things?

MAJOR (*inspecting them*) Charming, charming!—Very nice. This one's quite good. You shall teach my daughter drawing too. My resources don't allow me to keep a whole battalion of sinfully expensive tutors on my payroll. But see here, Mr. Hasty, for heaven's sake, don't be hard on her. The little girl is different from the boy. She's my only solace. And she's been rather droopy lately, if you know what I mean. I see the child wasting away, losing her health, her beauty, and so on, and there's nothing I can do about it. It breaks my heart.—I'm telling you this because I want you to be gentle with her.

ACT TWO

6

Halle in Saxony.

Fritz von Berg, Squint in shirtsleeves, sitting at the table. Buttress lying on the bed, Mrs. Blitz.

BUTTRESS Three months in Halle and I still haven't spoken to a girl!

FRITZ After all we have certain ties back home.

SQUINT You've got a girl there?

BUTTRESS Hic Rhodus, hic salta! The gentleman from Insterburg seems to be forgetting his physiology. A man doesn't go to bed with a girl because he loves her, he loves her because he wants to go to bed. You just wait till March!

SQUINT You must be getting the glooms without a girl. Why not move in with us, that will cheer you up. What's the sense in staying with that pastor? That's no place for you.

FRITZ How much do you pay here?

SQUINT We pay—what do we pay, Buttress?

BUTTRESS Nothing.

SQUINT Honest to goodness, brother, I don't know. Mrs. Blitz writes it all down, the rent, the coffee, the tobacco, whatever we ask for. We pay the bill once a year when our allowance comes.

FRITZ Do you owe her much right now?

SQUINT We paid up last week.

BUTTRESS His allowance is due.

SQUINT It will all be yours when it comes. If it ever does, Brother Buttress!

FRITZ You help each other out? That's very decent of you.

SQUINT We go halves. I couldn't afford it myself. This time they've cleaned me out. I had to fork over my whole allowance, didn't I, Buttress? And my coat that I hocked last July is still at the pawnshop. Heaven knows when I'll be able to redeem it.

FRITZ How do you manage in the meantime?

SQUINT Me?—I'm sick. This morning I received an invitation from Councillor Hamster's wife, and I went straight to bed.

FRITZ But how can you sit home all the time, in this lovely winter weather?

BUTTRESS Why not? He reads his favorite philosopher, Immanuel Kant.

FRITZ What does he do about his girl? We mustn't neglect our physiology.

BUTTRESS With girls it's not our coats that count, it's . . .

SQUINT Our heads, Berg. In my case it doesn't really matter, because my girl doesn't know me.

FRITZ You mean it's all imagination?

BUTTRESS He dreams about her. And his bed sheet gets it all.

What I say is: Tell me the girl you dreamed about and I'll tell you the girl you didn't sleep with. But now we've invited Insterburg for coffee. Where in blazes is the coffee? (*He stamps his foot*) Mrs. Blitz! Damn it, Mrs. Blitz, we paid you, didn't we?

(*Mrs. Blitz comes in with a serving of coffee*)

BUTTRESS Where on earth have you been, ma? Mr. Squint has been waiting for an hour.

MRS. BLITZ (*to Squint*) What? You good-for-nothing tramp, you alley-cat! What are you hollering about? I'll take the coffee away this minute, I'll—

BUTTRESS Biscuits.

MRS. BLITZ There aren't any. (*Referring to Squint*) Do you think I have nothing else to do than give that bald-headed lout his biscuits every afternoon?

BUTTRESS Why him? I need biscuits! You know I never touch coffee without biscuits—what am I paying you for?

MRS. BLITZ (*hands him biscuits out of her apron*) Now are you satisfied, you trombone? Mr. Buttress has a voice like a whole

regiment. (*To Squint*) Put your books away, they're no good anyway. All those beautiful, expensive books and you still don't know which way is up! Well, is the coffee all right? Is it? Tell me this minute or I'll tear the last hair out of your bald head.

SQUINT (*drinks*) Incomparable! Really, I never had better in all my life.

MRS. BLITZ You see, you young rascal. If Ma Blitz didn't take care of you and give you food and drink you'd starve by the wayside. Just look at him, Mr. von Berg, the way he goes around, without a coat to his name and his dressing-gown looking as if he'd been hanged in it and fallen off the gallows. This is the fourth year he's failed in philosophy. Why? Because he just can't get that stuff into his head. I feel sorry for his mother. She's a widow too. And now all the widows' and orphans' pensions have been reduced because of the glorious war. But you seem to be a nice, well-bred gentleman, I don't see how you can be friends with that lout. Well, I suppose it's coming from the same district that makes for a kind of family feeling. That's why I keep saying that Mr. von Berg should move in here. Then we might make something of you. That's what I say. (*Goes out*)

SQUINT You mightn't think so, Berg, but she's really a good soul.

FRITZ What's this about your failing all the time, Squint?

SQUINT I'm studying under Professor Wolffen. He detests Mr. Kant of Königsberg. And Kant is my man.

BUTTRESS Your Mr. Kant is a muddlehead. Listen to this—(*he picks up a book*)—"When peace is concluded after a war, it might not be amiss for a nation to let the thanksgiving celebrations be followed by a day of repentance, on which day the people, in the name of the state, would implore heaven's forgiveness for the great sin which mankind persists in committing—the utilization of the barbaric instrument that is war."—Imagine teaching stuff like that at a German university.

FRITZ It doesn't seem so wrong to me.

BUTTRESS Altogether wrong. Take the title: "Eternal Peace." If we stopped fighting old Blitz for one day, her coffee would

be pure barley. For four years now our friend here has been reeling off Mr. Kant's absurdities in Wolffen's classroom.

Naturally he flunks. Repeat after me: Mr. Kant is an idiot.

FRITZ Couldn't you say it just to get your degree?

SQUINT (*has carved something on the table top with his pocket knife*)

Here, read what I've carved.

FRITZ "No."

SQUINT I'll say it a fifth time if I have to. And my "No" applies equally to every aspect of German servility. As long as Germans find their only happiness in obeying orders, they will go on serving, preferably as soldiers, and sacrificing themselves to some supreme leader.

BUTTRESS I call it strength of character. You appall me. Squint, the upright! Squint, the fearless!

SQUINT Who is Wolffen anyway? He hates Kant's writing on freedom as the capon hates the cock's crow.

FRITZ I take it, Mr. Buttress, that you're not interested in these battles of minds.

BUTTRESS No. I'm going to be a tutor, I'll be shut up in some god-forsaken hole. In the meantime I've got to get in a lifetime of loving.

FRITZ This coffee tastes like barley.

BUTTRESS What's that? (*He tastes it*) So it does. With the biscuits I hadn't—(*Looks into the pot*) God damn it! (*Throws the coffee things out the window*) Barley coffee for five hundred guilders a year! It's an insult to Squint the upright!

SQUINT Buttress, you're raving, my dear Buttress!

MRS. BLITZ (*rushes in*) What's this? What in the devil is going on? (*To Squint*) Are you raving, sir, or has the devil got into you?

SQUINT Calm down, ma, I'll pay for it.

MRS. BLITZ (*with a horrible scream*) Where are my coffee things? Heavens alive, out the window!—I'll scratch your eyes out!

SQUINT There was a spider in the coffee; in my fright I threw it—is it my fault if the window was open?

MRS. BLITZ I wish you'd choked on that spider. If I sold you and all your belongings, it wouldn't pay for my coffee set, you worthless dog! Rack and ruin is all I get from you. I'll have you prosecuted, I'll have you locked up.

SQUINT Let it go for once, Mrs. Blitz. It won't happen again.
Please, Mrs. Blitz.

MRS. BLITZ And what's that on my table, you monster? Don't cover it up. He's been carving. Some obscenity. "No."

SQUINT It's in reference to Immanuel Kant.

MRS. BLITZ On my table! I'll call the constable. I—

BUTTRESS That'll do, Ma Blitz. Don't frighten Squint the fearless. The coffee was inadequate. Get thee hence, woman!

MRS. BLITZ (*intimidated*) Well, I must say—throwing my coffee set out in the snow drifts . . . (*Goes out*)

SQUINT I fear nothing but that woman. She is devoid of understanding.

BUTTRESS What would you do without Buttress? You'd pay through the nose and starve to death.

FRITZ I'm thinking of taking up philosophy myself.

BUTTRESS Mr. von Berg, I only hope philosophy can stand it. Everybody's taking up philosophy. I'll have to change now, I'm going to the new comedy tonight. They're playing *Minna von Barnhelm*. I have a weakness for actresses.

FRITZ Can I come along? It's a nice play. If only I could take my Gussie to see it.

SQUINT I wish I could go too. But I haven't got a coat!—So her name is Gussie? I'll be glad to show you my girl. Now I really need a coat.

BUTTRESS You haven't got one, though. So I'll show him your girl. She's the daughter of Swandown the lutenist. She gets a free place in the standing room, thanks to her father. A footnote to the history of the war. Let's go, Berg. And mind you, don't neglect your physiology. (*Buttress and Fritz go out*)

7

Insterburg, in March. Gussie's room.

Gussie, Hasty.

GUSSIE I believe that God created me.

HASTY If only He hadn't! (*Helping her along*) And all . . .

GUSSIE And all other creatures . . .

HASTY And has given me . . .

GUSSIE And has given me, and keeps my body and soul . . .

HASTY Body too . . .

GUSSIE Eyes, ears, and all my limbs, my reason and all my senses . . .

HASTY And that . . .

GUSSIE And that he bestows upon me each day clothing and shoes, meat and drink, house and home, wife and child, fields and cattle, and all my goods . . .

HASTY And supplies in abundance all needs and . . .

GUSSIE Necessities of my . . .

HASTY Body . . .

GUSSIE And life . . .

HASTY And protects me . . .

GUSSIE From all perils, and guards and defends me from all . . .

HASTY Bodily harm . . .

GUSSIE What's the matter with you?

HASTY Without any merit or worthiness in me.

GUSSIE Amen.

HASTY Weren't we supposed to draw from nature? You had a good laugh, didn't you, at the thought of that silly tutor waiting for you at the mill. And how many more fine March mornings will there be? (*Hasty slaps his palm with the ruler*)

GUSSIE Ha, ha, ha, my dear tutor. Really, I had no time.

HASTY Don't be cruel.

GUSSIE But what *is* the matter with you? I never saw you so deep in thought. And I've noticed that you don't eat.

HASTY You have? Really? You're a paragon of compassion.

GUSSIE Oh, Mr. Hasty—

HASTY Would you care to draw from nature this afternoon?

GUSSIE (*touches his hand*) Oh, dearest tutor, forgive me for disappointing you yesterday. It was quite impossible for me to come. I was so amazingly enrhumée.

HASTY I suppose it's the same today. Perhaps we had better stop drawing from nature altogether. It doesn't amuse you any more.

GUSSIE (*half in tears*) How can you say that, Mr. Hasty? It's the one thing I like to do.

HASTY Or find yourself a drawing master. Because I believe I shall ask your father to remove the object of your aversion, your hatred, your cruelty, from your sight. I can see that instruction from me is becoming more and more repellent to you.

GUSSIE Mr. Hasty—

HASTY Let me be. I must find a way of putting an end to this miserable life, since death is denied me.

GUSSIE Mr. Hasty—

HASTY You're torturing me. (*He tears himself away and rushes out*)

GUSSIE Oh, how sorry I feel for him!

8

Privy Councillor von Berg's ornamental garden.

Privy councillor, Pastor Hasty, Hasty.

PRIVY COUNCILLOR I'm sorry for him and even more sorry for you, reverend. But intercede with my brother on behalf of your son—no!

PASTOR But think of it, only three hundred thalers! Three hundred miserable thalers! The major promised him four hundred. Then, after the first six months, he paid him a hundred and forty. And now, at the beginning of the second half year, while more and more work is being piled on my son, he speaks of two hundred as his annual wage. That is unjust. Begging your pardon.

PRIVY COUNCILLOR Why? A tutor! What does he do? Lolls about and gets paid for it. Wastes the best hours of the day with a young master who doesn't want to learn anything and has no need to. Spends the rest of his time bowing to madame's whims or studying the lines in the major's face. Eats when he's full and fasts when he's hungry, drinks punch when he wants to piss and plays cards when he has the colic. Without freedom life goes backward. Freedom is to man what water is to fish. A man who forfeits freedom poisons his noblest impulses, smothers the sweetest joys of life in their bloom, and murders himself.

PASTOR But—oh my! Those are the things a tutor must put up with. No one can do what he likes all the time, my son understands that, but—

HASTY It was about the horse, your worship.

PRIVY COUNCILLOR So much the worse if he puts up with it, so much the worse. Blast it, reverend, you didn't raise your son to be a common servant. And what is he now but a servant?

PASTOR But, your worship! Goodness gracious!

HASTY Stick to the horse, father.

PASTOR Good God, sir! There have to be tutors in this world.

PRIVY COUNCILLOR In my opinion tutors are not needed in this world. Worthless trash, that's what they are.

PASTOR Your worship, I didn't come here to be insulted. I was a tutor myself once. Good day.

HASTY Father!

PASTOR I'm not a hot-headed man, but how can I listen to such absurdities? Tutors are useless, you say. I hear your son is studying at the university of Halle. Who taught him sense and good manners?

PRIVY COUNCILLOR Why, I had the good judgment to send him to public school. And the few principles he needs to conduct

himself as a scholar and a gentleman, he got from me. We talked it over at the dinner table.

PASTOR I see—(*takes out his watch*)—alas, your worship, I haven't time for prolonged disputations. I'm a plain pastor, a shepherd of souls, and when once in a blue moon I come all the way from Ingelshausen I have errands to do.

HASTY Your worship, couldn't you . . .

PASTOR Forget it, son. Come along!

HASTY The horse. Couldn't you put in a word with your brother? The worst of it is that I never get away from Insterburg. For six whole months—I'm coming, father—I haven't left . . . I was promised a horse to ride to Königsberg every three months!

PRIVY COUNCILLOR What do you want to go to Königsberg for?

HASTY Visit the libraries, your worship.

PRIVY COUNCILLOR The brothels seems more likely. Been feeling your oats? (*The pastor goes out*)

HASTY Your worship . . . Something terrible may happen . . . (*Follows his father*)

PRIVY COUNCILLOR (*calling after them*) My brother hasn't enough horses for his farm, and here you are, wanting one for your dissipations.

ACT THREE

9

Halle.

Squint, Fritz.

FRITZ Look what she's sent me. She copied it out of the Klopstock I gave her:

"Oh thou, to find thee I learned love,
Which has exalted my swelling heart
And now, in ever sweeter dreams,
Is wafting me to Paradise."

And this one:

"Great, O Mother Nature, is the glory of thy invention
On every field and meadow . . ."

And now she's drawing from nature. But what are you brooding about?

SQUINT A metaphysical problem, brother, a philosophical problem. I'll dissect it for you. Let us assume that a woman's body and senses are directed toward an object—a particular man—and so likewise are her soul and mind—in other words that the thought of her mind and the desires of her body coincide, then everything is as it should be and without philosophical interest. Agreed?

FRITZ Agreed. But what are you driving at?

SQUINT That it becomes of philosophical interest when she

loves one man A and desires, or gives her body to, another man, B.

FRITZ Is that an actual case?

SQUINT A hypothetical case. But what is the solution? Is it the body or the spirit that counts? You see that the problem is philosophical.

FRITZ You mean: should we say that she loves A or that she's sleeping with B?

SQUINT Precisely. And what's the answer?

FRITZ I suppose you want me to say that the spirit counts. But why are you trembling? Has it anything to do with you?

SQUINT Berg, there are times when I feel almost weary of philosophy. (*He bursts into tears*) Oh, Buttress, Buttress! Why did you have to take my place at the meeting with Miss Swandown? Why did you take her to the shooting gallery to put in a word for me? If only I had had a coat! It was for me, for me that you fondled her and got her with child!

FRITZ So that's it. Has Buttress confessed? Poor Squint.

SQUINT Poor Squint! Doubly poor, for he lacks the where-withal to help the unhappy creatures. Poor Squint, always flunking, ruined by his perseverance in antagonizing Professor Wolfen. So that now he is unable to do his duty.

FRITZ What duty?

SQUINT Don't you see? The surgeon wants twenty thalers.

FRITZ But good Lord, not from you. It wasn't you that . . .

SQUINT But it was done for my sake and no one else's. I'm the one she loves. If he hadn't gone in my stead, she'd never have . . . Her tear-drenched face haunts my dreams: when Buttress brought her to me, she took my hand and whispered: "We talked of nothing but you the whole time." How can I abandon her?

FRITZ (*embraces him*) Magnanimous Squint. I understand. What will you do? What shall we do? Yes, we. Am I not your friend? Your duty is my duty. Command my purse.

SQUINT Fritz, oh Fritz, can it be true? Is the earth peopled by a race of philosophers?

FRITZ (*gives him money*) Quick, take it. I had it on me because I was going to Insterburg for the holidays.

SQUINT Then I won't accept it. Your Gussie! I shouldn't won-

der if she needed you badly, straining her eyes for the sight of you. And no Fritz appears to embrace her. He sacrifices his travel money for Miss Swandown . . .

FRITZ Forget it, Squint, let's say that I am not overcome by emotion but guided by reason. My girl expects me for the holidays, she says so in her letter. (*Reads*) "In your Easter holidays you will find a bolder Juliet!" Frankly, Squint, those words frightened me. No, believe me, I shall do better not to go home this year. I'm not the chaste Joseph I used to be. I too have developed in this Halle of yours.

SQUINT How can I ever repay you, brother?

FRITZ By teaching me more about your rebellious Immanuel Kant during the holidays. I'll have got the better of the bargain.

SQUINT I will—though his rebellion is limited to the realm of ideas. (*The doorbell rings*)
(*Squint leaps to the window*)

SQUINT Here they are!
(*Enter Buttress and Miss Swandown*)

BUTTRESS Well, we're back. The Hunold woman wants thirty thalers.—Miss Swandown is indisposed. A glass of water would help.

SQUINT My dear, adorable child, you find me—my friend here too, he knows all—overcome with tenderness.

BUTTRESS Tenderness is all very well, but how about some cash?

SQUINT Everything will be all right. But first that glass of . . .

BUTTRESS All right, you say? You'll cough up? You've got money? Don't run away! You've got it?

SQUINT Miss Swandown, I won't keep you in suspense another minute. I shall do my duty without reserve or delay.

BUTTRESS Twenty thalers?

SQUINT (*counts out the money on the table*) Rendered liquid by the profound influences of philosophy!—Twenty thalers!

MISS SWANDOWN You're very kind, Mr. Squint, seeing you didn't get anything out of it for yourself.

BUTTRESS Don't say that. But you've done a good deed. Kiss her, honest Squint, you deserve it.

SQUINT (*with a deep bow*) Your humble servant, Miss Swandown.

(*Buttress and Miss Swandown leave*)

SQUINT There must be something good in Buttress, or he wouldn't be so crude. He's eating his heart out. (*Returns the purse to Fritz*) You have acted on the principles of Immanuel Kant, Brother Berg. (*Looks for something in a book*) "So act that you can will the maxim of your action to become universal law." Writings on Morals, Part One, Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysics of Morals, Chapter Two.

10

Insterburg, Gussie's room.

Gussie and Hasty, in bed.

HASTY Your father's been to blame from the start. Why did he have to scrimp on a teacher for you? Then in the same burst of avarice he reduced my pay. And now he wants to cut me down to a hundred and twenty thalers for next year. I shall have to quit.

GUSSIE But what will I do then?

HASTY Get them to send you to my father's rectory in Ingelshausen.

GUSSIE My uncle would never let my father send me to your father's house.

HASTY Confound his beastly nobleman's pride!

GUSSIE (*takes his hand*) Don't be angry, Hermann! (*Kisses him*)

Oh, dear teacher, how does your pupil look? As pale as death?

HASTY As fit as a fiddle. Now, I need your advice.—Yesterday your brother slapped my face again.

GUSSIE You must bear it for my sake.

HASTY Then maybe I needn't regret my failure to control my-

self. I suppose I'm being fed too well for a slave. The celery, the turkey, the chocolate—how can a body so pampered help succumbing to sin?

GUSSIE Faugh! Is that the language of love? It was fate, my dear teacher.

HASTY (*as she continues to raise his hand intermittently to her lips*)

Let me think . . . (*Sits up in thought*)

GUSSIE (*in the pantomime described*) Oh, Romeo, if this were thy hand!—Why hast thou abandoned me, ignoble Romeo? Dost not thou know that thy Juliet is dying for love of thee—hated, despised, rejected by all the world, by her whole family? (*Presses his hands to her eyes*) Cruel Romeo!

HASTY (*looks up*) What are you raving about?

GUSSIE It's a soliloquy from a tragedy that I like to recite when I'm upset.

HASTY I don't care for tragedies.

GUSSIE Oh, Halle, worlds away!—Maybe I shouldn't blame it all on you. Your father forbade you to write to me—but love surmounts all obstacles.—You've forgotten me . . .

HASTY (*suspiciously*) Even in bed I have to decipher everything you say.

GUSSIE (*kisses Hasty's hands with abandon*) Oh, heavenly Romeo!

HASTY (*crossly*) I'm not Romeo, I'm Hasty, if you don't mind. (*Gussie turns to the wall, weeps. Hasty remorsefully kisses her hand and gazes at her for a while*) What happened to Abelard could happen to me. I seem to recall that you've read the romance, Miss von Berg. Would you recapitulate what you know of Abelard and Héloïse?

GUSSIE When it became known that Abelard and Héloïse had secretly married, her uncle, Monsignor Fulbert, canon in Paris, had him seized and deprived of his manhood.

HASTY I hear footsteps in the hall!

GUSSIE My father—Oh God—you've stayed three-quarters of an hour too long. (*Hasty burries away*) Oh Fritz, my love!

11

Mrs. von Berg's parlor. August.

Mrs. von Berg, Count Vermouth, the major.

MRS. VON BERG (*at the spinet*) Ah, dear count, so many talents are doomed to hide their light. They find no scope in this narrow world. Oh, to be a singer! With the candles shining on me, perhaps even the footlights. It's denied us, our station doesn't permit of such liberties. Do you like this one? (*She sings a languishing air*)

COUNT Superb!

MRS. VON BERG Flatterer! I'm not in good voice today. This one . . . (*Sings another*)

COUNT A natural talent. Some have it, some don't. And if they don't, nothing helps.

MRS. VON BERG Believe me, it's training and hard work as well. Sheer will power.

COUNT I wish Miss Gussie had inherited such genius. Where is she?

MRS. VON BERG Ah, yes. (*Hums*) I see I'm keeping you. Is there anything more ghastly than an artist—however talented—who doesn't know when to stop? Just one more, may I? (*She sings*)

COUNT Charming. But, madame, am I never to see Miss Gussie again? Has she been well since the hunt the other day?

MRS. VON BERG Thank you for asking. She had a toothache last night, that's why she must keep out of sight today. And your stomach, count, after the oysters?

COUNT Oh, I'm used to it.—I must say that Miss Gussie has developed magnificently—blossomed out like a rose since last fall.

MRS. VON BERG These modern young girls . . . they change from

day to day. Those sentimental books they read give them consumptive shadows under their eyes; but then a little drawing from nature brings back the bloom . . . I always say that proper health begins at forty.

COUNT And health is the true source of beauty. (*Mrs. von Berg plays the spinet again*) If Miss Gussie were to come down, I should like to take a stroll in the garden with her. I can't ask you, dear madame, because of the fontanelle on your leg.

MRS. VON BERG If only certain people were as concerned about my well-being . . . Since the war the major has had only one interest, his damnable farm. All day he's in the fields, and when he comes home he sits there like a stick.—Oh, dear count . . . A few days ago he took it into his head to sleep with me again, but in the middle of the night he jumped out of bed and started . . . ha, ha, ha, I shouldn't be telling you this, but you know how ridiculous my husband can be . . .

COUNT Started . . . ?

MRS. VON BERG Poring over his account books. And groaning something dreadful. I could hear him down in his study. But his foolishness is nothing to me. Let him turn Quaker or Pietist if he wants to. It won't make him any uglier or more amiable in my eyes than he is now. (*She looks roguishly at the count*)

COUNT (*chucks her under the chin*) What wicked things you say! —But where is Gussie? I'd really like to take a stroll with her.

MRS. VON BERG Hush! Here comes the major . . . Why don't you go out with him, count? He'll show you his hothouse.

COUNT Fancy that!—But it's your daughter I want to see.

MRS. VON BERG I dare say she's not dressed yet. The girl is insufferably lazy.

(*Major von Berg comes in, his coat bespattered with mud*)

MRS. VON BERG (*plays Handel's Largo on the spinet*) Well, husband? What have you been up to now? I don't lay eyes on you from morning to night, and now look at him, count. Doesn't he look exactly like Terence's Self-Tormentor in Madame Dacier's edition? I do believe you've been carting manure, Major von Berg.

COUNT It's true, major, you've never looked so horrible. I'd never have expected farming to go to your head like this.

MRS. VON BERG Avarice, pure, execrable avarice. He thinks we'll starve if he doesn't go burrowing in the muck like a mole. He spades, he plows, he harrows. If you must turn peasant, couldn't you find me another husband first?

MAJOR Zounds, woman, you forget that wars have to be paid for. But it's true, I never see you ladies any more. Where's Gussie?

MRS. VON BERG (*still playing*) Gussie! Gussie! Gussie! That's all I ever hear! The mole, there's nothing else left in his head. Only Gussie. His Gussie, always his Gussie.

MAJOR Yes, and you keep her away from me because you're jealous of her.

MRS. VON BERG How the man speaks to me! As if I kept her locked up. I'm sick of it. She should come down when there are visitors. (*Goes out*)

COUNT I am embarrassed, Major von Berg. Permit me to take my leave.

MAJOR Just hang around.

COUNT (*after a pause*) Speaking of economics, have you seen a gazette recently? There's been quite a stir about the king founding a bank in Berlin on the French . . .

MAJOR Berlin!

COUNT Don't say anything against Berlin. We are definitely making progress, all Europe is watching us. First the ballet and now the bank, à la bonne heure!

MAJOR A bank! It's a rotten business, count, take it from me. We can perish like Sodom without any need for banks and such-like novelties, indeed we can.

COUNT But think of the ballet. Between you and me, major, I've always felt that a brief excursion to Sodom now and then is good for the blood.

(*Mrs. von Berg rushes in*)

MRS. VON BERG Help! Help! Husband—we're lost—the family! The family!

COUNT Madame, what on earth . . . ?

MRS. VON BERG The family—the infamy—oh, I can't go on. (*Falls on a chair*) Your daughter!

MAJOR (*goes toward her*) What's happened? Out with it! Speak up or I'll wring your neck!

MRS. VON BERG Your daughter—the tutor—hurry! (*She faints*)

MAJOR Has he made a whore of her? (*Shakes her*) Is this what I burrow in the earth for? What's the good of collapsing? This is no time to collapse. Made a whore of her? Is that it? All right. Let them turn the whole world into a whore, with ballets, banks and spinets. And you, Berg, take up your pitchfork. (*To his wife*) Come on, you're a whore too! Watch me! (*Tears the doors open*) I'll set an example. That's what God has preserved me for to this day—to make an example of my wife and children.—Burn it all, burn, burn, burn! (*Carries his wife, who is still in a faint, off the stage*)

COUNT Parbleu!

12

Village school near Insterburg.

Wenceslas, Hasty, Lisa.

WENCESLAS (*sitting at a table, spectacles on his nose, ruling sheets of paper*) Who's there? What is it?

HASTY (*who has rushed in breathlessly*) Help! Save me! Dear schoolmaster! They'll kill me!

WENCESLAS Who are you?

HASTY The tutor at the castle. Major von Berg is after me with all his servants. He wants to shoot me.

WENCESLAS God forbid!—Just sit down quietly.—You'll be safe with me, here's my hand on it. Tell me all about it while I write out these exercises.

HASTY Let me collect my wits first.

WENCESLAS All right. Get your breath. But tell me this—tutor—(*puts his ruler aside, takes off his spectacles and looks at him for a while*) what on earth can have made your master so angry at you?—Would you kindly pass me the sand box?—You see, I have to rule out the lines for my boys, because nothing is

harder for them to learn than to write straight, to write evenly.—The main thing, I always say, is to write not elegantly or quickly, but straight, because handwriting has its effect on everything else, morals, thought, in short everything, my dear Mr. Tutor. A man who can't write straight, I always say, can't act straight either.—Where were we? Would you put these sheets over there?

HASTY (*who has done so*) May I ask you for a glass of water?

WENCESLAS Water?—You shall have beer. But—yes, what were we talking about?

HASTY About writing straight.

WENCESLAS No, about the major. Ha, ha, ha. Now let's see. Do you know, Mr.—what is your name?

HASTY Name—my name is—Midge.

WENCESLAS Mr. Midge.—Forgotten it, hadn't you? Strange how our thoughts can give us the slip.

HASTY May I open the window? Oh God, there's Count Vermouth.

WENCESLAS (*severely*) I need the sand box again, if you please.

(*Hasty, shaking, hands it to him. Count Vermouth comes in with some servants brandishing pistols. Hasty dashes into another room*)

WENCESLAS Nervi corrupti!

COUNT I'm looking for a certain Hasty. A student with a brown braided coat.

WENCESLAS Sir, in our village it is customary to remove your hat when addressing the master of the house.

COUNT The matter is urgent.—Is he here or not?

WENCESLAS What can the man have done that you should be looking for him with pistols? (*The count is about to enter the side room; Wenceslas blocks the door*) Stop, sir. That is my room. Leave my house this instant, sir, or I shall pull the bell cord and half a dozen sturdy peasants will beat you to a pulp, pistols and all! If you behave like a bandit, you shall be treated like a bandit, sir! The way out is the same as the way in, but in case you've forgotten—(*He takes him by the hand and leads him out the door*)

HASTY (*peeps out of the side room*) Happy man! Envidable man! I admire you . . .

WENCESLAS Now sit down and have some knackwurst and

potato salad after your fright. Lisa! (*Lisa comes in*) Bring Mr. Midge a pitcher of beer. (*Lisa goes out*) She's my ward.—While you're waiting for your beer, you may as well earn your supper and help me to rule these sheets. It will improve your morals. (*Hasty sits down to do the ruling*) Who was that rude fellow who wanted you?

HASTY A certain Count Vermouth, the major's son-in-law to be. He's jealous of me, because the young lady can't stand him. That's all.

WENCESLAS But what's the sense in it? What does the young lady want of you, monsieur ladykiller? Better get that sort of thing out of your head and stick to knackwurst. Go ahead, eat! But don't make grease spots. And draw the lines evenly, if you please.—I dare say there's a difference between the major's table and mine. But when schoolmaster Wenceslas eats his supper, a clear conscience helps him digest it, and when Mr. Midge was eating pheasant with mushroom sauce, his conscience prompted moral qualms that drove every bite he swallowed back into his throat.

HASTY Very true, but that's not all. You don't realize how fortunate you are. Have you never seen a slave in a braided coat? Oh, freedom, golden freedom!

WENCESLAS (*motioning him back to his ruling*) That churl wanting to break into my room without so much as a by-your-leave! Just let him come back, with all the majors in the world! Zooks! Now you've finished your knackwurst, and the beer isn't here yet.—Won't you smoke a pipe with me?

HASTY I'll be glad to try. I've never smoked in all my life.

WENCESLAS Of course not, you fine gentlemen, it discolors your teeth, is that it? I started smoking when I was barely weaned. Exchanged my mother's nipple for the mouthpiece. Ha, ha, ha. Smoke is good for foul air, and for foul cravings as well. Here's my program: on rising, cold water and a pipe, school till eleven, then another pipe until the soup's ready. My Lisa's soup is as good as any French chef's. Then another pipe, then school until four. Then I write out exercises until supper time. Most usually I have a cold supper, sausage with salad, a piece of cheese, or whatever the good Lord may provide. And then a last pipe before bed.

HASTY God help me, I've come to a smoking den!

WENCESLAS And with all that I'm fat and healthy and cheerful, and I haven't even begun to think about death.

HASTY You earn good wages, I presume?

WENCESLAS Wages? That's a stupid question, Mr. Midge. Forgive me, did you say wages? My wages are from God, a good conscience. Have you any idea what it means to be a schoolmaster? (*He struts awesomely to and fro*) I shape human beings in my own image. German heroes! Healthy minds in healthy bodies, not French monkeys. On the one hand, as it were, mental giants, on the other hand, good subjects. And what does that mean? Does it mean subjected giants or gigantic subjects? It means: reach for the stars, but God help you if you kick against the pricks!—Won't you have a smoke? Go on, have a pipe. Conquer yourself—no, not you, the German hero—if you would conquer the world. I'll take the cane to you if ever you . . . Oh dear (*he snatches the goose quill which Hasty has been picking his teeth with*) what are you doing! A grown man! Haven't you even learned to take care of your own body? Picking the teeth is suicide. There. If something gets stuck in your teeth (*takes water and rinses his mouth*) this is the thing to do, if you want to have sound teeth. Go on, do it! (*Hasty does so*)

HASTY He's going to schoolmaster me to death.

WENCESLAS You don't care for the pipe? Just spend a few days with old Wenceslas, and I'll wager this hand will shape you so you won't know yourself.—I assume, young man, that without a reference your tutoring days are over. And you can't hope for a position in a village school because the king, now that his war is over, is putting in his disabled sergeants as schoolmasters. Yes, that's how it is. You're probably weak in Latin, but as a tutor you must have a likely handwriting. You could lend me a hand in the evening. It's time I began to spare my eyes. You could write out the exercises for my boys. But you will have to work hard, I can tell you that!

HASTY The humiliation!

(*The major, the privy councillor and Count Vermouth enter with servants*)

MAJOR (*with pistol drawn*) The deuce . . . ! There he sits like a

rabbit in the cabbage patch. (*He shoots and hits Hasty in the arm. Hasty tumbles from his chair*)

PRIVY COUNCILLOR (*has vainly tried to restrain the major*) Brother! (*Pushes him angrily*) Now you've done it, you fool!

MAJOR Hey! Are you dead? Speak to me! Where is my daughter?

WENCESLAS Your lordships! Is the last judgment on its way? (*He reaches for the bread knife*) I'll teach you to assault a Christian in his own house!

HASTY Don't, I implore you!—It's the major. I deserved it for what I did to his daughter.

PRIVY COUNCILLOR Worthy schoolmaster, is there a surgeon in the village? He's wounded in the arm. I want to have him cared for.

WENCESLAS Cared for! You bandits! Do you think you can shoot people down because you're rich enough to have them cared for? He's my assistant. He's been in my house exactly one year. A quiet, peaceful, industrious man. And you barge in and shoot down my assistant before my very eyes!—I'll be avenged!

PRIVY COUNCILLOR (*motions a servant to bandage Hasty*) What's the good of lying, my dear man? We know the whole story. (*To the major*) I shall send Fritz to Italy, he must never hear of this.—He'll bleed to death. Run for a surgeon!

WENCESLAS Nonsense! If you make wounds, you can heal them yourselves, you bandits! I'm not running to get the surgeon, I'm running to ring the tocsin. (*Leaves*)

(*Servants put Hasty back on his chair. Hasty comes to*)

MAJOR And now to you! If it takes red-hot pincers: Where is my daughter?

HASTY If your worship had only granted me a horse to ride to Königsberg, as you agreed to!

MAJOR What's the horse got to do with it, you scoundrel? Where's my daughter?

HASTY I don't know.

MAJOR You don't know? (*Draws another pistol*)

LISA (*comes in with the beer*) Don't shoot! Poor Mr. Midge! (*Throws herself in front of Hasty*)

PRIVY COUNCILLOR (*snatches the pistol from the Major and fires it out*)

the window) Do we have to put you in chains, you . . . *(To Hasty)* Answer us!

HASTY I haven't seen her since I escaped from your house. I swear to God before whose judgment seat I may soon stand.

MAJOR *(about to assault him again)* Another charge of powder wasted! Swine, I wish it had gone straight through your body, seeing we can't get any sense out of you!

PRIVY COUNCILLOR Berg!

LISA Are you Major von Berg? Oh, your grace, there was a lady at the inn, she ordered coffee. As she was paying she said to the landlord, "If my father comes asking for me, don't tell him I went to the pond by the elm trees. Tell him, good people, that I send him my love."

MAJOR To the pond? To the pond! To the pond! *(Goes out)*

PRIVY COUNCILLOR The man can't swim.

COUNT If only I could!

PRIVY COUNCILLOR I mustn't lose sight of him. *(Throws Hasty a purse)* Use it to get well and remember you wounded my brother a good deal worse than he wounded you.

(The privy councillor and the count leave quickly)

HASTY *(with bitterness)* What's the horse got to do with it! My *vita sexualis* can go hang!

13

Near Insterburg.

Gussie at the edge of a pond surrounded by bushes. Major, privy councillor, Count Vermouth, servants.

GUSSIE Nobody's coming. Must I die here? Fritz, oh Fritz! Why didn't you come home for the holidays? Then I was still . . . Clouds are passing over the moon. No one will ever find me.

MAJOR *(from a distance)* Gussie! Gussie!

(Gussie puts down her shoes and wades into the pond, her face turned back)

MAJOR *(appears, followed by the privy councillor and Count Vermouth)*
Heigh-ho! Somebody's gone into the pond—there, look, it's a woman. After her, Berg! I'll save her or go to hell. *(Wades after her)*

PRIVY COUNCILLOR God Almighty, he's going to drown too.

COUNT Let's hope it's shallow.

PRIVY COUNCILLOR To the other side! *(To the servants who are carrying long poles)* After them, fellows!—I think he's grabbed her . . . There . . . back there, by the bushes.—Don't you see? He's wading along the shore. God preserve our wits! On the other hand, can one help being moved by human . . .
(The servants probe the pond with their poles)

MAJOR *(backstage)* Help! This way! It's my daughter!

PRIVY COUNCILLOR *(to Count Vermouth)* The tragedy of it all! The tragedy! The poor man; for all we know, he's saving two lives.

COUNT *(to privy councillor)* I feel so helpless. Those crude fellows *(pointing at the servants)* are better at it.

MAJOR Odds bobs, zookers and bodkins! Give me a pole! The plague . . .

PRIVY COUNCILLOR *(kicks a servant in the behind, making him fall in the water)* Get out there, you rascal. Don't just think of yourself!

(Major Berg carries Gussie on to the stage)

MAJOR There! *(Puts her down and kneels down beside her)* Gussie! Why did you do it?—If only you had breathed a word to me. I'd have bought the swine a title, then you could have crawled into bed with him to your heart's content.—For God's sake, do something. She's only fainted.

PRIVY COUNCILLOR I wish I knew where that goddam surgeon was.

GUSSIE *(in a feeble voice)* Father!

MAJOR What do you want?

GUSSIE Your forgiveness.

MAJOR Forgiveness be damned, you spoiled brat.—No, don't collapse. I forgive you—and you forgive me. I've put a bullet through that scoundrel's brains.

PRIVY COUNCILLOR I think we'd better carry her.

MAJOR Let her be! What concern is she of yours? Worry about your own flesh and blood at home! (*Carrying her in his arms*) There, my girl—really, I ought to walk back into the pond with you (*swings her toward the pond*)—but maybe we shouldn't try to swim until we've learned how.—(*Presses her to his heart*) Godless hussy! (*Carries her out*)

Interlude

To the accompaniment of a music box which misses a few notes, the stage revolves to show the passing of a year and how our characters are spending it. Winter: Fritz von Berg strolling under lemon trees in Italy; spring: Squint marrying his Caroline in Halle; summer: Gussie sewing diapers in Insterburg; autumn: Hasty still writing out exercises at the village school.

ACT FOUR

14

Village school.

a)

Stormy night in November. Hasty is correcting papers. Lisa comes in.

LISA I've frightened you. I only wanted to ask you if you—
needed anything, Mr. Midge.

HASTY Me? Need anything? Why, I never do. What should a
wretch like me need? I have everything. And I'll be going to
bed soon.

LISA I shouldn't have disturbed you. I'll go, Mr. Midge. You're
always writing.

HASTY Heavenly apparition!

LISA I thought the lamp might be smoking.

HASTY I see.

LISA But it isn't.

HASTY You're cold, my child. Let me put my scarf on you.
Now go.

LISA A pot of coffee, Mr. Midge, to keep you warm?

HASTY No. Yes, make some coffee. (*Lisa goes out*) Have I gone
mad? What has happened to me? This innocent creature. This
angel of kindness. And I, in these few minutes assailed by
contemptible instincts! Whence this hurricane rising from a
mere nothing? She shows an innocent solicitude—is my lamp
smoking?—I requite her with carnal lust! Under my benefac-

tor's own roof, in sight of the objects—this chair, this bed—with which he has surrounded me in his loving kindness. That is how I repay the man who taught me what it is to teach. Monster that I am, shall I never mend my ways? Is it to start all over again? Haven't I already . . . ? My head's in a whirl. Ravished. Fished out of the pond by a despairing father, pushed in by me. And now, is it to be Lisa? Never! Never! (*He bars the door*) Midge, get back to work! (*He works again*) Write straight, live straight. What am I coming to with this hurricane in my heart? How long does it take to make a pot of coffee? Grade papers, correct spelling, a bodice is made for concealment, stop trying to look through it. Scoundrel without a reference, without a future. (*A knocking at the door*) Don't move! The latch will hold. Angel, turn back! (*He opens the door*)

LISA (*comes in with a pot*) Why do you lock yourself in? No evil-doer would come this way at night. Here's your hot drink.

HASTY Thank you. (*Takes it from her and pushes her out*) That's done. (*Sinks onto a chair*) Go in peace, Lisa, you're saved. (*Another knock*) The latch! (*Lisa comes in*)

LISA I'm back again, Mr. Midge. Do you mind?

HASTY Yes, I mind.

LISA I've come because you said there would be no catechism tomorrow—because you—that's why I've come—you said—I've come to ask if there'd be catechism tomorrow.

HASTY Oh!—Those cheeks, angels of heaven! See how they burn with the fire of innocence, then condemn me if you can—Lisa, why are your hands trembling? Why are your lips so pale and your cheeks so red? What do you want?

LISA To know if there'll be catechism tomorrow.

HASTY Come, Lisa, sit down.—Who puts your hair up when you go to church? (*Makes her sit down on a chair beside him*)

LISA (*wants to get up*) Excuse me. My cap must be crooked. There was such a wind when I went to the kitchen.

HASTY (*takes both her hands in his*) Oh you are—How old are you, Lisa? Have you ever—what was I saying—have you ever been courted?

LISA (*gaily*) Oh yes, and Greta at the Sheepshead Inn was

envious. "How can he be so interested in that stupid girl?" that's what she used to say. And then I knew an officer too, before you came here.

HASTY An officer?

LISA Oh, yes. And most distinguished, with three stripes on his arm. But I was too young, my mother wouldn't let me have him.

HASTY And then?

LISA Because of the life soldiers lead, always moving about, and in the end they have nothing.

HASTY And me? What have I got?

LISA But you're in trouble, Mr. Midge.

HASTY Would you—would you really—(*slaps his hand with the ruler*)

LISA Oh yes, with all my heart. (*Hasty throws himself on her and kisses her hand. Lisa takes it away*) Oh, you mustn't. My hand is all black from the stove.—Shame on you, what are you doing? You know, I always thought I wanted a clergyman. Even as a child I liked educated gentlemen, they're so gentle and polite, not slam-bang like soldiers, though in a way I like them too, I can't deny it, because of their gay coats. If clergymen wore such gay coats, really it would be the end of me.

HASTY (*leaps at her and seizes her*) Oh, Lisa! You don't know how unhappy I am.

LISA For shame, sir, what are you doing?

HASTY Once more. And then never never again! (*Kisses her*)

LISA No, no, no . . .

WENCESLAS (*bursting in*) What's going on? Is this the attention you owe to your flock? A rabid wolf in sheep's clothing? Seducing the innocence it's your duty to protect!

HASTY Master Wenceslas!

WENCESLAS Not a word! You've shown your true colors. Leave my house, you seducer!

LISA (*kneels before Wenceslas*) Dear godfather, he's done me no wrong.

WENCESLAS He's done you more wrong than if he were your worst enemy. He has seduced your innocent mind.

HASTY I confess my guilt.—But how could anyone resist such charms? Unless you tear the heart out of my body . . .

WENCESLAS Do you mean to go on seducing innocent girls? Is that your plan?

HASTY No, no. God is my witness, if I sealed these innocent lips with my kisses, it was only to stop them from inciting me to far greater crimes with the magic of their speech.

WENCESLAS And how would you support her, you pauper?

HASTY That's what I told her.

WENCESLAS Do you think that will keep her fed? You, get up, innocent victim. You're a disgrace to your profession. Where are your references? Where can you show your face? Out of my sight, you reprobate! *(Takes the copy books away)* You will corrupt my good children no longer. Tomorrow morning you leave my house! *(He drags Lisa out)*

b)

Hasty, at the open window.

HASTY There I go again!—Roar, ye night winds! And you, unworthy fiend, out into the storm with you! Did you think you could shape little children in your own image? Behold your face in this window glass, and tremble! Does a nurseryman pull up his seedlings? Guardian, where is your guardian? All your life you've been an outcast. After what you have done will you go to him and say: Unfortunate man—unfortunate because you trusted me—give me the hand of your ward whom I have abused. You can ruin her, but can you feed her? And yet, is it so reprehensible to be human? Carnal or not, are such impulses unnatural? A curse on nature for not making me a stone in the presence of her creation! What's wrong with me? A stablehand is allowed to be a man. Not I. Shall I pluck out the eye that offends me? Shall I stand up to you, spirit of creation, and say: I reject your purposes? The face you gave me is disfigured, I myself disfigured it because it did not fit. And say to the wind, when you come back tomorrow, I shall be here no longer. So be it. I must. I will set an example to make you tremble! *(Tears off his coat)*

c)

Hasty, in bed. Wenceslas comes in.

WENCESLAS Holy God! What is it now? Why have you called me away from my work? This room!—It looks like a battlefield. Why are you still in bed? I've told you to leave my house.

You should have been on your way to Heidebühl long ago.

HASTY I believe I'm on my way somewhere else.

WENCESLAS Why those fearful glances? They make my blood run cold. *Frigidus per ossa*—What is it?—As if you had killed a man.—Why are you making such a face?

HASTY Master Wenceslas, I don't know if I've done right.—I've castrated myself.

WENCESLAS What?—Emasculated?—But that's . . .

HASTY I hope you'll grant me a few more days under your desecrated roof.

WENCESLAS Say no more. You shouldn't have done it. Why, you're a second Origen! Let me embrace you, young man, oh precious chosen vessel. A deed like this can make you a beacon of the school system, a shining star of pedagogy. I congratulate you. Wenceslas salutes you with a *Jubilate* and *Evoë*—my spiritual son!

HASTY And yet, dear schoolmaster, I regret it.

WENCESLAS What, regret it? Not for one moment, my dear colleague! Will you darken your noble deed with foolish regrets and sully it with sinful tears? Do I see tears welling up in your eyes? Swallow your tears and intone a joyful song: I have freed myself from vanity, and need but wings to fly. Are you going to behave like Lot's wife, looking back at Sodom when you've already reached the peace and safety of Zoar? No, no. I prefer our blessed Doctor Luther: Whatsoever rises is for our dear Lord, whatsoever descends is for Beelzebub.

HASTY I'm afraid my motives were of a different kind . . .

Repentance . . . Concern for my livelihood.

WENCESLAS That's taken care of now. Who can be better fitted

for a teaching career than you? Now you have the highest qualifications of them all. Haven't you destroyed your rebellious spirit, subordinated everything to duty? No longer will your private life deflect you from shaping human beings in your own image. What more could you have done? As to your future, don't let it worry you. You've done your duty. Your prospects are of the brightest.

HASTY I've written a letter to Major von Berg. It's there on the table, beside the knife. Would you read it and send it off if you approve?

WENCESLAS (*reads*) "... And so, by my own decision—a cruel one, I can assure you—I have eliminated any danger that may have arisen from my manhood . . . Between Scylla and Charybdis, between nature and my profession, I have chosen my profession, and venture to hope that you will most mercifully vouchsafe me a testimonial permitting me the exercise of that profession. All the more so, most gracious lord, as I shall endeavor must dutifully, in all other respects as well—I repeat, in all respects—to do and to teach exactly what is desired of me, for my own good and that of my fellow men . . . I am, most gracious etc. . . . Your most humble and obedient servant . . . Postscript: Furthermore I promise always to teach the martyrdom of our Hero-King without omissions."

HASTY Is it still storming?

WENCESLAS No.

HASTY No.

WENCESLAS Everything's covered with snow.

HASTY Safely tucked away.

WENCESLAS Great-hearted sufferer, any teaching position, I assure you, any teaching position in the district is open to you.

ACT FIVE

15

Halle, winter.

Squint in slippers, smoking his pipe. Fritz in traveling habit.

SQUINT Let me quote what Immanuel Kant has to say: "Matrimony (matrimonium) is a contract between two persons providing for the lifelong use of each other's sexual organs." And here: "Hence, though based on the supposition of pleasure through the mutual use of the sexual attributes, that is to say, the sexual organs, the marriage contract is no arbitrary contract, but one made necessary by the laws of mankind, that is, if man and woman desire to derive pleasure from one another in accordance with their sexual attributes, they must of necessity marry, and this necessity follows from the laws prescribed by pure reason." You see.

FRITZ I thought you'd given up Kant.

SQUINT Only in public. How else could I have obtained a teaching position? And without a position, how could I have married my Caroline—you haven't met her yet, the dear. And as you see right here, I had to.

FRITZ So your favorite philosopher has proved to you that you had to give him up, and you've given him up by following his precepts. What a world!

SQUINT An antinomy, that's all. He could have resolved it in a twinkling.

FRITZ What was the subject of your thesis?

SQUINT I was clever, Berg. I left philosophy well alone. "War, Father of all Things"—still, I managed to slip in a suitably

obscure phrase implying that the paternity is not always demonst . . .

FRITZ Speaking of Caroline, what became of Miss Swandown?

SQUINT She sank lower and lower.—Caroline is very different. She was made for marriage. Incidentally, she's the rector's daughter.

FRITZ So the two of you live here beside the stove, happy.—Do you ever see Buttress?

SQUINT I find that I've rather cooled toward him, Berg. Now that we're both schoolmasters. There's some good in him, but . . . Caroline finds him attractive and I've forbidden her to see him. Women have got to be kept in hand, Berg . . . How was Italy?

FRITZ Divine. It's made a man of me.

SQUINT Half a year in Italy!—There's a father after Rousseau's own heart.

FRITZ I don't know, Squint. Sending me to Italy like that and giving me that curious piece of advice, not to write to Gussie—I was too excited about the trip to wonder why. Down there, among the lemons and olives, I began to worry, but consoled myself with the thought that he was putting our love to the test. And then in Pompeii a sudden fear sent me flying back—covering as much as eighty miles a day. Here in Halle the same emotions made me interrupt my headlong journey. It seemed to me that perhaps I had better not return too quickly to my beloved Insterburg. And here I find this letter, I'm afraid to open it. My hand shakes every time I try to break the seal. You break it, brother, and read it to me.
(*Throws himself into an easy chair*)

SQUINT Who is it from? Is it your father's hand?

FRITZ No, it's from a certain Soapbubble. A neighbor.

SQUINT (*reads*) "In view of the friendship I have had the honor of enjoying in your father's house—" (*Stops*) the fellow's spelling is insane! (*Reads on*) "—I feel obliged, considering that having long been out of communication with our delightful Insterburg you can hardly be aware of the incident concerning the tutor who has been put out of your esteemed uncle's house . . . (*Stops*)

FRITZ Go on!

SQUINT “. . . for ravishing your cousin, whereby her spirits were so shaken that she jumped into a pond, which calamity threw your family into the utmost . . .” (*Fritz faints*) Berg! What’s the matter? (*Pours lavender water on him*) Berg, Berg, speak to me!—Damn letter, if only I hadn’t . . . It must be a fabrication—Berg! Berg!

FRITZ Leave me alone. It will pass.

SQUINT Shall I get someone to bleed you?

FRITZ Faugh! Don’t be so French! Read it again.

SQUINT Certainly not.—It’s a disgusting, malicious letter, I’ll . . . (*Tears it up*)

FRITZ Ravished—drowned—(*Strikes his forehead*) My fault. All my fault.

SQUINT You’re out of your mind.—Is it your fault if she lets that tutor seduce her?

FRITZ Squint, I swore to go back home for the holidays! And I went to Italy. Damn picturesqueness! She despaired of me. Grief. You know her melancholy bent. Loneliness, disappointed love. It’s as plain as day: I’m a villain. I’m to blame for her death. (*Throws himself back into the chair and covers his face*)

SQUINT Pure imagination!—It’s not true, it wasn’t like that at all. (*Stamps his foot*) ’Sblood! How can you be stupid enough to believe all this, she can’t have been all that innocent. Women! We know what they are. They don’t want it, but they do it. When they itch, they look for someone to scratch them.

FRITZ I beg of you, Squint, she is no more.

SQUINT Berg, look me in the eye and tell me women are not as I say.

(*Caroline Squint comes in*)

SQUINT Here she is, my beloved wife. This is Berg, an old school friend.

CAROLINE I’ve heard about you. You’re a companion of Squint’s rebellious youth.

SQUINT Yes, indeed. Make him some coffee, he needs it. He’s just had a terrible letter from home.

CAROLINE Oh, it can’t be so terrible that a good cup of coffee . . .

FRITZ Please, don't trouble. I must hurry home. My friends, my place is at a grave-side. (*Leaves*)

SQUINT Sad.—But it's no concern of ours. Come, Caroline, come and warm yourself by the stove.

16

Insterburg, Mrs. von Berg's parlor.

Mrs. von Berg, the major, Gussie, privy councillor, Leopold. A baby in a cradle.

PRIVY COUNCILLOR My dear sister-in-law, my dear brother, dear Gussie, dear Leopold! Let us drain a glass of grog in honor of St. Nicholas and the first snow that decks the streets so gloriously. But first it seems fitting to ask the servants in to share the hot spirits with us and admire the landscape so beautifully transformed.

GUSSIE I'll call them. (*Leaves*)

PRIVY COUNCILLOR Oh yes, there's a letter for you from Hasty, in which he proclaims his contrition and swears to change for the better. He encloses a medical certificate to the effect that he, with his own hands, has so corrected his God-given corpus as never again to be a menace to his female pupils.

MRS. VON BERG Disgusting!

PRIVY COUNCILLOR I agree, sister-in-law. And he asks you, dear Berg, in exchange for his certificate to give him a reference that will enable him to pursue his profession.

MAJOR (*laughs*) He ought to be all right now.

PRIVY COUNCILLOR Say what you will, he's a man of principle.

MAJOR A rare disciplinarian!

PRIVY COUNCILLOR A true pedagogue, by the grace of God.

MAJOR He shall have his reference.

PRIVY COUNCILLOR Thou shalt not muzzle the ox—ha, ha, ha, the ox—when he treadeth out the corn. (*They laugh uproariously*)

MRS. VON BERG Disgusting!—

(Maid comes hurrying in)

MAID Sir! Madame! The young master. *(She sobs)*

MAJOR Which young master?

MAID Master Fritz!

PRIVY COUNCILLOR Fritz back from Italy?

MAID He's downstairs. What a thing to happen! They'll put it in the gazette. He comes in in his traveling clothes. He sees Miss Gussie. Stares at her like she's a ghost. Cries out: "Gussie, you're not dead? My own Gussie, not dead?" She's in his arms. "Oh Fritz, you've come?" And all is love. But then: "Poor me, don't touch me, I'm your Gussie no longer." And he, you should have heard his voice . . . "Oh yes, you are!"—and she: "No, you don't know." And him so loud they could hear him in the kitchen: "I know all about it, and all I want is—to beg your forgiveness. My Gussie!" Oh, here they come.

MRS. VON BERG Gussie and Fritz?

MAJOR 'Ods bodkins!

(Fritz and Gussie enter)

FRITZ Father! And my second parents! I'll fight for my Gussie to the last drop of blood.

MAJOR You mean you want to marry her? In spite of everything?

FRITZ In spite? No, not in spite, because of. Let me tell you, Gussie, how a strange experience in Halle opened my eyes to the glory and weakness of your sex. A young lady, to make a long story short, was in love, passionately in love, with a splendid fellow, conscientious, devoted to philosophy, though perhaps somewhat unworldly. Nevertheless—perhaps, my friends, I should say for that very reason—she gave herself to a man of far less consequence. But while in his arms she never for one moment—she told me so herself—thought of anyone but the man she truly loved. Yes, dear father, you may not understand it but I do, and now more than ever; in reality, in spirit, she gave herself to her true beloved. Nothing, my friends, would have happened to Gussie, if oddly enough because of my involvement in this very affair, I hadn't stayed away during the holidays.

PRIVY COUNCILLOR Or if a certain young scoundrel had been given a horse.

GUSSIE Oh, Fritz, that's how it was, just like that.

FRITZ Papa, I thought she was a ghost when I saw her on the stairs. But she's real.

PRIVY COUNCILLOR Always stick to reality—isn't that what I've always taught you?—unless it contradicts the inner image.

MAJOR Come! (*Takes Fritz to the sofa*) Are you a philosopher?

MRS. VON BERG (*referring to the baby*) Do you recognize this?

PRIVY COUNCILLOR My son, having justified the cause, you must not shrink back from the effect. Having climbed a tall tree, will you climb down again to retrieve your hat that has blown away? What have you studied logic for?

FRITZ (*kisses the baby and hands it to Gussie*) Now the child is mine too. I love it already. It has your angelic features.

GUSSIE Fritz!

PRIVY COUNCILLOR You're right!

MRS. VON BERG Oh dear!

(*The servants appear*)

MAJOR Don't gape, you people, don't gossip, don't judge. Join a happy father in a drink. To the young couple!

LEOPOLD And to the little one!

MRS. VON BERG Leopold!

PRIVY COUNCILLOR And to the first snow!

MRS. VON BERG Berg, I suspect you would like me to contribute something in the popular vein. (*She sings at the spinet while all others drink*)

Oh silent winter snow

That cloaks the earth below.

Men sit and idly gaze

Upon the snow-clad days.

And in the barn the silent cows

Hark to the silence as they drowse.

17

Village schoolhouse.

Wenceslas, Hasty, both dressed in black. Lisa.

WENCESLAS What did you think of my sermon, colleague? Did you find it edifying?

HASTY Oh yes. Yes indeed. (*Sighs*)

WENCESLAS (*takes off his wig and puts on a nightcap*) That won't do.—Tell me what part of it your heart most favored. Listen to me—sit down—I have something to say to you: in church just now I saw something that troubled me. Your gaze as you sat there was so shifty that, to tell you the truth, I felt ashamed of you in the eyes of the congregation. Several times I nearly lost the thread of my discourse. I said to myself: Is this the young warrior who fought so bravely and triumphed, as it were, in the hardest of battles?—And I must confess, you made me angry. I saw the direction of your thoughts, I saw it only too clearly. Toward the center door, down by the organ. Did you for one moment hear what I was saying? Can you repeat one word of my sermon? It was all for your benefit, you know, designed to fit your particular case.—Oh, oh, oh!

HASTY I was delighted with your idea that the rebirth of our souls can be likened to the raising of flax and hemp, and that just as hemp must be freed of its husks by vigorous beating, so our spirits must be prepared for heaven by suffering, hardship, and the eradication of all sensuality.

WENCESLAS It was designed to fit your case, my friend.

HASTY However, I can't deny that your list of the devils expelled from heaven and the whole story about the revolt and about Lucifer regarding himself as the most beautiful strikes me as sheer superstition—our age has outgrown all that!

WENCESLAS That's why this rational world of ours will go to the devil. Take the devil away from the peasant and he'll turn against his master like a devil, so proving that devils exist. But enough of that—what was I saying? Yes. Just tell me, whom were you looking at all through my sermon? Don't deny it. You certainly were not looking at me, or you'd have had to squint disgracefully.

HASTY I don't know what you mean.

WENCESLAS You were looking down toward the girls who get their catechism from you.—My dear friend, can a pinch of the old Adam have lingered in your heart? I ask you—the very thought makes my hair stand on end—what will become of you if you yield to the old evil promptings when you lack the means of satisfying them? (*Embraces him*) I beg you, my dear son, by these tears that I'm shedding out of the most heartfelt concern for you: Don't go back to the fleshpots of Egypt when you have come so close to Canaan! How can you keep leering at my ward as if you were dying of thirst? As if she would content herself with a capon.

(*Lisa steps forward*)

LISA Oh yes, dear godfather, I'm perfectly content with him.

HASTY Woe is me!

LISA Believe me, dear godfather, I shall never let him go.

WENCESLAS Oh.—The devil—Lisa, you don't understand—
Lisa, I can't tell you why, but you can't marry him, it's impossible.

LISA Why is it impossible, dear godfather? You always said I might marry a clergyman some day.

WENCESLAS The devil take you, he can't—God forgive me my sins, can't you take my word for it?

HASTY Maybe that's not what she's asking for.—Lisa, I cannot sleep with you.

LISA But you can wake with me. If only we can be together in the daytime and smile at each other and kiss each other's hands now and then, because, by God, I'm fond of you. God knows, I'm fond of you.

HASTY You see, Master Wenceslas! All she wants of me is love. Does a happy marriage really require the satisfaction of animal lusts?

WENCESLAS Heaven help us.—Be fruitful and multiply, says the Good Book. Where there is marriage there must be children.

LISA No, dear godfather. I swear that I want no children as long as I live. You've got plenty of ducks and chickens for me to feed every day: must I feed children too?

HASTY (*kisses her*) My divine Lisa!

WENCESLAS (*pries them apart*) I declare! What's this? Before my very eyes?—All right, go ahead, crawl into bed, it's better to marry than to burn.—But, Mr. Midge, it's all over between you and me. The high hopes I set in you as a paragon without compare—the expectations aroused by your heroism—merciful heavens! To me you're just another hybrid, neither fish nor flesh. (*Goes out*)

HASTY And I feel sure their lordships at Insterburg will help me—in my present state—to find a good position that will enable me to support my wife.

Epilogue

Spoken by the actor who played the tutor.

That's the conclusion of our play
We hope it's brought you some dismay.
You've seen the sorry state of mind
To which the Germans were resigned
A hundred years and even ten years ago—
It still prevails in many parts, you know.
You've seen a tutor of the German school
Led to his calvary of ridicule—
Poor devil whom they so browbeat
He can't distinguish hands from feet.
Enacting a parable bigger than life
He finally has recourse to the knife
Exterminating his virility
Which only brought him misery.
For when he did as nature meant
The higher-ups were not content
And when he crawled as best he could
They cut down on his livelihood.
His sterling value they proclaimed
Only when he was cut and maimed.
His backbone broken, he would do
His duty by breaking his pupils' too.
The German schoolmaster, if one reflects
Is the product and origin of our defects.
Pupils and teachers of this century:
Consider his servility
And let it teach you to be free.