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GOETZ VON BERLICHINGEN WITH THE IRON HAND

A PLAY

Translated by Cyrus Hamlin

Characters

EMPEROR MAXIMILIAN	LORDS and LADIES at the Bamberg
GOETZ VON BERLICHINGEN	court
ELISABETH, his wife	IMPERIAL COUNCILLORS
MARIA, his sister	ALDERMEN of Heilbronn
KARL, his young son	JUDGES of the Secret Tribunal
GEORG, his page	TWO MERCHANTS from Nuremberg
BISHOP OF BAMBERG	MAX STUMPF, servant of the Count
WEISLINGEN	Palatine
ADELHEID VON	A STRANGER
WALLDORF	FATHER OF THE BRIDE } peasants
LIEBETRAUT	BRIDEGROOM
ABBOT OF FULDA	HORSEMEN in the service of Ber-
OLEARIUS, Doctor of Laws	lichingen, Weislingen, Bamberg
BROTHER MARTIN	CAPTAINS, OFFICERS, SOLDIERS OF
HANS VON SELBITZ	THE IMPERIAL ARMY
FRANZ VON SICKINGEN	INNKEEPER
LERSE	COURT SUMMONER
FRANZ, Weislingen's page	CITIZENS OF HEILBRONN
LADIES-IN-WAITING to Adelheid	CITY WATCHMAN
METZLER, SIEVERS, LINK, KOHL,	JAILOR
WILD, leaders of the rebellious	PEASANTS
peasants	CAPTAIN OF THE GYPSIES
	GYPSY MEN AND WOMEN

ACT I

Schwarzenberg in Franconia

An Inn

Metzler, Sievers at a table. Two Troopers at the fire. Innkeeper.

SIEVERS. Hansel, another glass of brandy, and give us a good Christian measure.

INNKEEPER. With you it's never enough.

METZLER (*quietly to Sievers*). Tell me again about Berlichingen! The Bambergers over there are so angry, they're black in the face.

SIEVERS. Bambergers? What are *they* doing here?

METZLER. For two days Weislingen has been up at the castle with the Count; those are his guards. I don't know where he's come from; they're waiting for him; he's going back to Bamberg.

SIEVERS. Who is Weislingen?

METZLER. The Bishop's right hand, a powerful lord, who is lying in wait to cause trouble for Goetz.

SIEVERS. He'd better be careful.

METZLER (*softly*). Keep it up. (*Aloud:*) Since when has Goetz been having difficulty with the Bishop of Bamberg again? The report was that everything had been worked out and smoothed over.

SIEVERS. Aye! You try working something out with priests! When the Bishop saw he was getting nowhere and always coming up short, he started to crawl and bargain for a truce. And unbelievably, honest Berlichingen gave in, as he always does when he's got the advantage.

METZLER. God preserve him! An upright Lord!

SIEVERS. Now think, is that not an outrage? They cut down one of his pages, when he least expects it. But for that he'll give them another delousing!

METZLER. How stupid that his last foray misfired; he must have been fit to be tied.

SIEVERS. I can't remember when anything vexed him so. Just think, everything had been reconnoitered precisely, when the Bishop would leave his bath, how many horsemen he'd have, which road; and if news hadn't been leaked by some traitor, he'd have blessed him his bath and rubbed him dry.

FIRST TROOPER. What's that talk about our Bishop? I think you're itching for a fight.

SIEVERS. Tend to your own affairs. There's nothing at our table concerns you.

SECOND TROOPER. Who said you could speak of our Bishop without respect?

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SIEVERS. Do I owe you questions and answers? What a fool!

First Trooper boxes his ears.

METZLER. Knock the dog dead!

They start to fight.

SECOND TROOPER. Come on, if you've got the guts!

INNKEEPER (*pulling them apart*). Can't you keep peace! Damn it all! If you have a score to settle, do it outside. In my tavern I keep things orderly and decent. (*Pushes the troopers out the door.*) And just what are you asses trying to do?

METZLER. Watch what you call us, Hansel, or we'll use your bald head for bowling. Come on, comrade, we'll thrash 'em out o' doors.

Enter two of Berlichingen's Troopers.

FIRST TROOPER. What's going on?

SIEVERS. Ah, good day, Peter! Veit, good day! Where are you coming from?

SECOND TROOPER. Take care you don't let on who we serve.

SIEVERS (*whispering*). Then your Lord Goetz won't be far off either?

FIRST TROOPER. Hold your tongue! Are you in trouble?

SIEVERS. You met the fellows outside. They're Bambergers.

FIRST TROOPER. What are they doing here?

METZLER. Weislingen is up at the castle, with his noble lord; they're his guard.

FIRST TROOPER. Weislingen?

SECOND TROOPER (*whispering*). Peter! What a stroke of good luck! (*Aloud:*) How long has he been there?

METZLER. Two days already. But he plans to leave today, so I heard one of those fellows say.

FIRST TROOPER (*whispering*). Didn't I tell you that he came this way! We could have wasted a lot of time over there. Come on, Veit.

SIEVERS. First help us beat up those Bambergers.

SECOND TROOPER. There're also two of you. We've got to leave. Adieu! (*They leave.*)

SIEVERS. Mangy dogs, those troopers! If you don't offer them pay, they won't do you a single favor.

METZLER. I could swear they're up to something. Who do they serve?

SIEVERS. I'm not supposed to say. They're in Goetz's service.

METZLER. Well! Now let's get on to those two outside. Come on, as long as I've got a cudgel, their roasting spits don't scare me.

SIEVERS. If only just once we could go after the princes that way; they skin us alive.

A Shelter in the Forest

GOETZ (*outside the door beneath a linden tree*). What's keeping my men?

I mustn't stop moving or I'll fall asleep. Five days and nights on the prowl. They make you pay for it, this bit of life and freedom. For that, when I've caught you, Weislingen, I'll have satisfaction. (*Pours a drink.*) Empty again! Georg! As long as I don't lack for a drink and a bold spirit, I'll laugh at the powerplays and the intrigues of princes.—Georg!—Just send your loyal Weislingen out to visit your uncles and cousins, and let him slander me. Go ahead. I'm wide awake. You slipped away from me, Bishop! So your dear Weislingen will have to even the score.—Georg! Is the lad deaf? Georg! Georg!

PAGE (*in the breastplate of an adult*). My Lord!

GOETZ. Where were you hiding? Did you fall asleep? What the devil kind of costume is that? Come here, you look good in it. Don't be ashamed, boy. You're a bold one! Indeed, if you could only fill it out! Is that Hans's cuirass?

GEORG. He wanted to sleep for a bit and unbuckled it.

GOETZ. He has more comfort than his lord.

GEORG. Don't be angry! I took it quietly and put it on, and fetched my father's old sword from the wall, ran out on the field and drew it out.

GOETZ. And swung it about? That will have done a lot of good to the brambles and thorns. Is Hans asleep?

GEORG. When you called he jumped up and shouted to me that you called. I tried to unbuckle the harness, then I heard you a second time, a third.

GOETZ. Go, give him back his breastplate and tell him, he should get ready and look after the horses.

GEORG. I fed the horses already and put on their bridles. You can mount whenever you want.

GOETZ. Bring me a jug of wine, give Hans a glass too, tell him to be alert, things are going to happen. Any minute I hope my scouts will be coming back.

GEORG. Ah, mighty Lord!

GOETZ. What's the matter?

GEORG. Can't I go along?

GOETZ. Some other time, Georg, when we're catching merchants and plundering wagons.

GEORG. Some other time! How often you've said that to me. Why not this time? This time! I'll just run along behind, only keep an eye out to the side. I'll fetch back your arrows after they're shot.

GOETZ. Next time, Georg. First you have to have a doublet, a helmet and a lance.

GEORG. Take me along. If I'd been there the last time, you would not have lost your crossbow.

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GOETZ. You know about that?

GEORG. You threw it at your opponent's head, and one of his squires ran off with it; so it was lost! Right? Have I got it?

GOETZ. Do my fellows tell you that?

GEORG. Yes! And for that, when we're grooming the horses, I pipe them all kinds of tunes and teach them all kinds of songs.

GOETZ. You're a good lad.

GEORG. Take me along, so I can prove it to you.

GOETZ. Next time, on my word. Unarmed, as you are, you mustn't go into battle. The future will call for good men, too. I tell you, boy, it will be a fine time. Princes will offer their treasures for a man they now hate. Go, Georg, give Hans back his cuirass and bring me wine. (*Georg leaves.*) Where have my fellows got to! It's incredible. A monk! Where has he come from?

Brother Martin enters.

GOETZ. Good evening, worthy Father! Where do you come from so late? For a holy man of peace, you put many knights to shame.

MARTIN. Thank you, noble Lord! I stand before you only as a humble brother, if it's a question of title. My cloister name is Augustin, but I prefer to be called Martin, my Christian name.

GOETZ. You're tired, Brother Martin, and no doubt thirsty! (*The page comes.*) Here comes the wine, at just the right time.

MARTIN. For me, a drink of water. I am not allowed to drink wine.

GOETZ. Is that your vow?

MARTIN. No, noble lord, it is not against my vows to drink wine; but because wine is contrary to my vows, I do not drink wine.

GOETZ. How do you mean that?

MARTIN. Lucky for you that you don't understand. Food and drink, so I believe, are the life of man.

GOETZ. True!

MARTIN. When you have eaten and drunk, you are as if newborn; you're stronger, bolder, more capable of action. Wine rejoices the human heart, and joyfulness is the mother of all virtues. When you have drunk wine, you are in every respect double what you ought to be, twice as ingenious, twice as enterprising, twice as effective.

GOETZ. The way I drink, that's true.

MARTIN. That is what I am talking about. We, however—

Enter Georg with water.

GOETZ (*secretly to Georg*). Go out to the road toward Dachsbad and lie down with your ear to the ground, listen whether you can hear the horses coming and get back here quickly.

MARTIN. But we, when we eat and drink, are just the reverse of what we ought to be. Our sleepy digestion attunes our heads to our bellies, and

in the weakness of a gluttonous repose desires are conceived which quickly overwhelm their progenitor.

GOETZ. One glass, Brother Martin, will not disturb your sleep. You have walked far today. (*Drinks his health.*) Here's to warriors!

MARTIN. In God's name! (*They touch glasses.*) I cannot tolerate idle people; and yet I cannot say that all monks are idle; they do whatever they can. I have just come from the Priory of St. Veit, where I slept last night. The Prior took me into his garden; that's a real beehive of activity! What splendid salad greens! Cabbages to your heart's desire! and especially cauliflower and artichokes, like no others in Europe!

GOETZ. That does not sound like your business. (*He gets up, looks for his page and then returns.*)

MARTIN. Would that God had made me a gardener, or some other laborer! I could truly be happy! My Abbot loves me; my convent is Erfurt in Saxony; he knows that I cannot be idle, so he sends me forth whenever something needs to be done. I am on my way to the Bishop of Constance.

GOETZ. Another glass! To a happy expedition!

MARTIN. The same to you.

GOETZ. Why do you look at me so, Brother?

MARTIN. I am fascinated by your armor.

GOETZ. Do you fancy it? It's heavy and tiring to wear it.

MARTIN. What is not tiring in this world? And nothing seems more tiring to me than not to be allowed to be a man. Poverty, chastity and obedience—three vows, each of which, taken singly, seems to be the most intolerable to nature, so unbearable are all of them. And to crawl timidly along for a lifetime under such a burden, or else the far more oppressive burden of conscience! Oh, Lord! what are the difficulties of your life compared to the wretchedness of a state that condemns the best impulses through which we are made, grow, and mature, all out of a misguided desire to be nearer to God.

GOETZ. If your vows were less sacred, I would persuade you to put on armor, I'd give you a horse, and we would take the field together.

MARTIN. Would to God my shoulders could feel the power to bear the armor and my arm the strength to strike my enemy from his horse!—Poor, weak hands, accustomed only to bearing crosses and the banners of peace and swinging censers, how could you control a lance and a sword! My voice, only used to performing Aves and Hallelujas, would serve your enemy as herald of my weakness while he'd be overpowered by yours. No vow shall prevent me from returning to the orders which were founded by my Creator himself!

GOETZ. To a happy return!

MARTIN. That I'll drink only to you. A return to my cell is always unhappy. When you return, Sir, within your walls, with the knowledge of

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your bravery and strength, immune to all fatigue, secure for the first time in a long while from enemy raids, you stretch out unarmed upon your bed and reach for sleep, which tastes sweeter to you than a drink does to me after long thirsting; then you can speak of happiness.

GOETZ. For all that it comes but seldom.

MARTIN (*more heated*). And when it comes, it's a taste of heaven.— When you come back loaded with spoils from your enemies, and you remember: I knocked that one from his horse before he could shoot, and that one I rode down, horse and all, and then you ride up to your castle, and—

GOETZ. What do you mean?

MARTIN. And your women! (*He fills his glass.*) To the health of your good wife! (*He wipes his eyes.*) You do have a wife?

GOETZ. A noble, virtuous woman!

MARTIN. Blessed be he who has a virtuous woman! for so is his life doubled in length. I know nothing of women, and yet a woman was the crown of creation.

GOETZ (*to himself*). I'm sorry for him! His sense of his station in life consumes his heart.

GEORG (*rushes in*). My Lord! I hear horses galloping! Two of them! It's sure to be them.

GOETZ. Lead my horse out and get Hans to mount up. Farewell, dear Brother, may God be with you. Be bold and patient. God will find a place for you.

MARTIN. May I ask your name?

GOETZ. Excuse me. Farewell. (*He extends his left hand.*)

MARTIN. Why do you offer me your left? Am I not worthy of the right hand of knighthood?

GOETZ. Even if you were the Emperor, you would have to make do with this. My right, although not unusable in war, is insensitive to the clasp of affection, it's one with its glove, you see, it is iron.

MARTIN. So you are Goetz von Berlichingen! Thanks be to God, that He has allowed me to see him, this man hated by princes, and the hope of the oppressed. (*He takes Goetz's right hand.*) Allow me this hand, allow me to kiss it.

GOETZ. You should not.

MARTIN. Allow me. Thou, more valuable than a reliquary hand, through which the most sacred blood has flowed, dead instrument, enlivened through the noblest spirit's trust in God.

Goetz puts on his helmet and takes his lance.

MARTIN. There was a monk among us years ago who visited you when it was shot away at Landshut, he told us what you suffered and how much it pained you to be crippled in your profession and how it came

to you that you had heard of someone who also had only one hand and yet served for a long time as a courageous cavalryman. I will never forget that.

The two soldiers enter. Goetz goes over to them. They talk in secret.

MARTIN (*continues to speak*). I will never forget that, how with noblest, simplest trust he spoke to God: “and if I had twelve hands and your Grace were not with me, what would they benefit me, so with one I can”—

GOETZ. Into the Haslach Forest then. (*Turns to Martin.*) Farewell, worthy Brother Martin. (*He kisses him.*)

MARTIN. Do not forget me, as I shall not forget you. (*Goetz leaves.*)

MARTIN. I felt so breathless when I saw him. He hardly spoke a word, and yet my spirit could still discern his spirit. It is a delight to behold so great a man.

GEORG. Reverend Sir, will you be sleeping with us?

MARTIN. May I have a bed?

GEORG. No, Sir. I only know of beds from hearsay, in our shelter there is nothing but straw.

MARTIN. That's fine as well. What is your name?

GEORG. Georg, reverend Sir.

MARTIN. Georg! There you have a bold patron saint.

GEORG. They say he was a knight, I want to be one, too.

MARTIN. Wait. (*He takes out a breviary and gives him a saint's card.*) Here you have him. Follow his example, be brave and fear God. (*Martin leaves.*)

GEORG. Oh, a beautiful white horse, if I ever had such a one!—and golden armor!—That's a nasty dragon—Now I'll go shoot starlings. —Saint Georg! make me grow tall and strong, give me a lance, arms and a horse, then let the dragons come after me.

Jaxthausen

Goetz's Castle

Elisabeth, his wife. Maria, his sister. Carl, his young son.

CARL. Please, dear Aunt, tell me again the story about the good child, it's really nice.

MARIA. You tell it to me, little rogue, then I'll know if you pay attention.

CARL. Wait a bit, let me think.—Once upon a time—yes—there was once a child, and its mother was sick, so the child went away.

MARIA. Not so. Then the mother said, “My dear child”—

CARL. “I'm sick.”

MARIA. “And can't go out.”

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CARL. And gave him money, and said, "Go away, and fetch some breakfast." Then along came a poor man.

MARIA. The child set out, and then he met an old man, who was—Now, Carl!

CARL. Who was—old.

MARIA. Of course. Who could hardly walk any more, and he said, "Dear child"—

CARL. "Give me something, I have had no food yesterday or today," then the child gave him the money.

MARIA. Which was supposed to be for his breakfast.

CARL. Then the old man said—

MARIA. Then the old man took the child—

CARL. By the hand, and said, and was changed to a beautiful shining saint, and said, "Dear child"—

MARIA. "For your good deed the Mother of God rewards you through me, if you touch anyone who is sick—"

CARL. "With your hand"—it was the right hand, I think.

MARIA. Yes.

CARL. "He'll be well instantly."

MARIA. So the child ran home and couldn't say anything for joy.

CARL. And he hugged his mother around the neck and wept for joy—

MARIA. Then the mother cried out, "What's happening to me?" and she was—now, Carl.

CARL. She was—she was—

MARIA. You're not paying attention anymore—she was well again. And then the child cured the King and the Emperor, and became so rich that he built a great cloister.

ELISABETH. I cannot understand why my Lord is not back yet. Five days and nights he has been away, and he hoped to be done with this expedition so quickly.

MARIA. I've long been worried. If I had a husband who always exposed himself to dangers, I would die in the first year.

ELISABETH. I thank God that he made me of sturdier stuff.

CARL. But does Papa have to ride off, if it's so dangerous?

MARIA. That's the way he wants it.

ELISABETH. He has to do it, dear Carl.

CARL. Why?

ELISABETH. Do you remember, how he rode out last time, when he brought you back sweet-rolls?

CARL. Will he bring me something again?

ELISABETH. I think so. You see, there was a tailor from Stuttgart, he was a splendid archer, and had won first prize at a shooting match in Cologne.

CARL. Was it much?

ELISABETH. A hundred thalers. And afterward they wouldn't give it to him.

MARIA. Yes, isn't that awful, Carl?

CARL. Awful people!

ELISABETH. Then the tailor came to your father and begged him to help him get his money. So he rode out and took a couple of people from Cologne captive and plagued them for so long that they paid up. Wouldn't you have ridden out, too?

CARL. Oh, no, there's a dark, dark wood to ride through, with gypsies and witches in it.

ELISABETH. What a fine fellow! Afraid of witches!

MARIA. You'll do a better job, Carl, if you live in your castle as a pious Christian knight. On your own estates there will be chances enough for doing good deeds. The most righteous knights do more injustice than justice on their campaigns.

ELISABETH. Sister, you don't know what you're saying. God grant that our boy will be braver in time and not follow the example of Weislingen, who behaves so disloyally towards my husband.

MARIA. Let us not pass judgment, Elisabeth. My brother is very bitter, as you are also. I am more an outside observer in the whole matter and can be fairer.

ELISABETH. He is not to be forgiven.

MARIA. What I have heard about him interests me. Even your husband used to tell so much that was loving and good about him! How happy their youth was, when they were together as honor pages for the Margrave.

ELISABETH. That may be. Just tell me what can ever have been good about a man who lays ambush for his best, most loyal friend, who sells his services to the enemies of my Lord, and who tries to deceive our noble Emperor, who is so well disposed toward us, with false and foul reports.

CARL. It's Papa! It's Papa! The watchman sounds the signal. "Hurrah! open the gates!"

ELISABETH. Then he comes with spoils.

A rider enters.

RIDER. We went hunting! And we caught our game! God greet you, noble ladies.

ELISABETH. You've got Weislingen?

RIDER. Himself and three horsemen.

ELISABETH. How did it happen that you were away so long?

RIDER. We lay in wait for him between Nuremberg and Bamberg, but he didn't appear, and we knew he was on the way. Finally we got news of

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him, he had travelled a side road and was sitting at his ease with the Count at Schwarzenberg.

ELISABETH. That's another one they also hope will be hostile to my husband.

RIDER. I said that right away to my Lord. Off! and we ride into Haslach Forest. And it was strange, as we were riding in the night, we met up with a shepherd there, and five wolves were attacking his flock and going at it full force. Then our Lord laughed out loud and said: "Good luck, dear comrades, good luck all round and to us, too." And such a good sign made us all happy. Right then, Weislingen comes riding by with four soldiers.

MARIA. My heart trembles within me.

RIDER. I and my comrade, as our Lord had commanded, sneaked up on him as if we had grown together, so that he couldn't stir or budge, the Lord and Hans fell upon the soldiers and took them captive. One of them escaped.

ELISABETH. I am anxious to see him. Will they be here soon?

RIDER. They're riding up the valley, in a quarter hour they'll be here.

MARIA. He will be dejected.

RIDER. He looks gloomy enough.

MARIA. The sight of him will be painful to my heart.

ELISABETH. Oh!—I must go get food ready. You will all be hungry.

RIDER. Right you are!

ELISABETH. Take the keys to the cellar and fetch some of our best wine, they have earned it. (*Elisabeth leaves.*)

CARL. I want to go along, Aunt.

MARIA. Come, child. (*They leave.*)

RIDER. He'll never be his father, otherwise he'd come along to the stables.

Goetz. Weislingen. Squires.

GOETZ (*placing his helmet and sword on the table*). Unbuckle my harness and give me my doublet. It will be good to feel comfortable again, Brother Martin, you spoke the truth. You've got us out of breath, Weislingen.

Weislingen answers nothing, pacing back and forth.

GOETZ. Be of good cheer. Come, unarm yourself. Where are your clothes? I hope nothing of yours has been lost. (*To an attendant:*) Go, ask his men and open his bags, see that nothing is missing. I could also lend you something of mine.

WEISLINGEN. Leave me as I am, it's no matter.

GOETZ. I could give you a nice, clean coat, though only of linen. It's become too tight for me. I wore it at the marriage of my noble lord

Count Palatine, that time when your Bishop turned so poisonous toward me. Two weeks before then I had sunk two of his ships on the River Main. And with Franz von Sickingen I climbed up the stairs in the Inn of the Stag at Heidelberg. Before you get to the top there is a landing and a little iron railing, there stood the Bishop and he shook hands with Franz as he walked past, and shook mine too as I came after. I laughed to myself and went to the Landgrave of Hanau, who was well disposed toward me, and I said, "The Bishop shook my hand, I bet he did not know me." The Bishop heard this, for I spoke loudly on purpose, and he approached us angrily and said, "Indeed, because I did not know you, I gave you my hand." Then I said, "My Lord, I saw clearly that you did not know me, and therefore I give you your hand back again." Then in his rage the little man turned as red around the neck as a crab and ran into the chamber to the Count Palatine Ludwig and to the Prince of Nassau and complained to them.

Afterwards we often had a good laugh about it.

WEISLINGEN. I wish you would leave me alone.

GOETZ. Why that? I beg you to be cheerful. You are in my power, and I will not misuse it.

WEISLINGEN. On that point I had no worries. That is your duty as a knight.

GOETZ. And you know that it is sacred to me.

WEISLINGEN. I am a captive and nothing else matters.

GOETZ. You should not speak so. What if you had to deal with princes, and they hung you up by chains in a deep dungeon, and the guard were to rob you of sleep with his calls.

*The squires enter with clothes. Weislingen undresses and puts on fresh clothing.
Carl enters.*

CARL. Good morning, Papa.

GOETZ (*kisses him*). Good morning, boy. How have you been keeping?

CARL. I've been doing very well, Papa. My aunt says I do very well.

GOETZ. So.

CARL. Did you bring something for me?

GOETZ. Not this time.

CARL. I have learned a lot.

GOETZ. Aha!

CARL. Shall I tell you the story about the good child?

GOETZ. After dinner.

CARL. I know something else.

GOETZ. What might that be?

CARL. Jaxthausen is a village and a castle on the Jaxt, for two hundred years it has belonged to the Lords of Berlichingen by right of inheritance and possession.

GOETZ. Do you know the Lord of Berlichingen?

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Carl stares at him.

GOETZ (*to himself*). He's so erudite he doesn't know his own father.—
To whom does Jaxthausen belong?

CARL. Jaxthausen is a village and a castle on the Jaxt.

GOETZ. I'm not asking that.—I knew every path and road and ford before I knew what river, village and castle were called.—Your mother is in the kitchen?

CARL. Yes, Papa! She's cooking white turnips and a roast of lamb.

GOETZ. You know that, too, Sir Kitchenmaster?

CARL. And as dessert for me Aunt is baking an apple.

GOETZ. Can't you eat it raw?

CARL. It tastes better this way.

GOETZ. You always have to have something special.—Weislingen! I will be with you again shortly. I must see my wife. Come along, Carl.

CARL. Who is that man?

GOETZ. Bid him welcome. Ask him to be cheerful.

CARL. There, man! You have my hand, be cheerful, dinner will be ready soon.

WEISLINGEN (*lifts him up and kisses him*). Happy child! Knowing no evil greater than the delay of supper. May God grant you great joy in the boy, Berlichingen!

GOETZ. Where there is bright light, there is also deep shadow—yet I would welcome it. Let's see what's happening. (*They leave.*)

WEISLINGEN. Oh, if only I might wake up! and all this were only a dream! In Berlichingen's power, from whom I barely had worked myself free, whose remembrance I shunned like fire, whom I hoped to overpower! And he—the old, true-hearted Goetz! Dear God, what will be the outcome of all this? Led back, Adelbert, into the halls where we as boys would race about like hunters. When you loved him, doted on him, as on your own soul. Who can be near him and still hate him? Alas! I am nothing at all here. Blissful days, you are gone, when old Berlichingen still sat here by the chimney, when we played all about him and loved one another like the angels. How worried the Bishop and my friends will be about me. I know the whole country will share in my misfortune. What does that matter? Can they give me what I'm striving for?

Enter Goetz with a bottle of wine and glasses.

GOETZ. Till dinner's ready, we'll have a drink. Come, sit yourself down, act as if you were at home. Just think, you're once again the guest of Goetz. It's been a long while since we sat together, a long while since we emptied a bottle together. (*Raises his glass in a toast.*) A cheerful heart!

WEISLINGEN. Those times are past.

GOETZ. God forbid! I admit, we'll not find such pleasant days again as those at the Margrave's court when we still slept and wandered about together. I recall my youth with joy. Do you still remember how I got into a fight with the Polack, the one whose curled and pomaded hair-do I accidentally ruffled with my sleeve?

WEISLINGEN. It was at table, and he struck at you with a dagger.

GOETZ. Well, I beat him soundly that time, and because of it you had a quarrel with one of his fellows. We always stuck together as good, sturdy fellows, and for that we were known to everyone. (*Fills a glass and raises it.*) Castor and Pollux! It always warmed my heart when the Margrave called us that.

WEISLINGEN. The Bishop of Wuerzburg started it.

GOETZ. There was a learned lord, and yet so congenial. I'll remember him as long as I live, how he coddled us, praised our oneness of spirit, and called any man fortunate who could pass as twin brother for his friend.

WEISLINGEN. No more of that.

GOETZ. Why not? When work is done, I know nothing more pleasant than to remember what's past. True, now that I think about it, how we bore everything together, both love and loss, were everything to each other, and how I supposed then it would be so our whole life long. Was that not my only comfort when this hand was shot away at Landshut and you attended me, showed more care than a brother. I hoped Adelbert would be my right hand in the future. And now—

WEISLINGEN. Alas!

GOETZ. If only you had followed me that time, when I asked you to march with me to Brabant, everything would have stayed the same. But you were held captive by the miserable attractions of court life and by the flirting and fawning of women. I always said to you, when you took up with those vain and vicious sluts and told them about unhappy marriages, maidens led astray, the rough complexion of some other woman, or whatever they wanted to hear, you would end up as a scoundrel, I said so, Adelbert.

WEISLINGEN. Where is all this leading?

GOETZ. Would to God I could forget it, or that it were otherwise. Are you not just as free, just as nobly born, as anyone in Germany, independent, owing allegiance only to the Emperor, and yet you cringe among vassals? What does the Bishop do for you? Is it because he is your neighbor? could be a nuisance for you? Do you not possess arms and friends enough to be an equal nuisance to him? You forget the worth of a free knight, dependent only on God, the Emperor and oneself. You go crawling, just to be the chief court toady for a selfish, jealous priest!

WEISLINGEN. Let me speak.

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GOETZ. What do you have to say?

WEISLINGEN. You look upon the princes as a wolf upon the shepherd.

And yet can you blame them for securing what is best for their people and lands? Are they safe for even a moment from the unruly knights, who attack their vassals on any highway and sack their castles and towns? Now if, on the other side, the lands of our dear Emperor are exposed to the violence of our archenemy, if he requires the aid of his estates, and if they are scarce able to defend their own lives; is it not a wise spirit that counsels them to think of the means for bringing peace to Germany, for deciding more fully the affairs of state, in order that everyone, great and small, might enjoy the blessings of peace? And you blame us, Berlichingen, that we place ourselves under their protection, when their help is close by, instead of his distant majesty, who can't even defend himself?

GOETZ. Yes! yes! I understand you! Weislingen, if the princes were truly as you describe them, we would all have what we desire. Peace and quiet! I believe that, oh yes! That's the wish of every bird of prey, to devour its plunder undisturbed. The general welfare of all! If that were the only cause for their grey hair. And they are playing with our Emperor in a disreputable way. He means well and wants to improve things. Then every day along comes a new tinker who tells him this or that. And because our Lord grasps things quickly and has only to speak and a thousand hands are set to work, he assumes that everything can be accomplished as quickly and easily. So decrees follow upon decrees, and one is forgotten for another, and whatever suits the needs of the princes, that's what they're after, and they prate about the peace and security of the state, until they get the lesser folk under foot. I'll swear an oath on it, that many give thanks to God in their hearts that the Turk holds the balance against the Emperor.

WEISLINGEN. You see it only from your side.

GOETZ. So does everyone. The question is which side has the right and the light, and the least one can say is that your moves shun the day.

WEISLINGEN. You're free to talk, since I'm your prisoner.

GOETZ. If your conscience is clear, then you're free. But what happened to the Permanent Peace? I still recall how as a boy of sixteen I went with the Margrave to the Imperial Diet. How the princes opened their yaps then, the ecclesiastics most of all! Your Bishop filled the Emperor's ear with his noise about justice, as if it had grown miraculously dear to his heart! and now he strikes down one of my pages, at a time when our affairs are orderly and I'm not thinking of doing anything bad. Isn't everything straight between us? What's he doing with my page?

WEISLINGEN. It happened without his knowledge.

GOETZ. Then why does he not release him?

WEISLINGEN. The page has not behaved as he should.

GOETZ. Not as he should! By my oath, he *has* behaved as he should, as sure as he was captured with your knowledge and the Bishop's. Do you two think I was only born yesterday, so I can't see where all this is leading?

WEISLINGEN. You're too suspicious and unfair to both of us.

GOETZ. Weislingen, shall I speak the truth, eye to eye? I am a thorn in your flesh, and Sickingen and Selbitz no less, because we are firmly resolved to die before we give thanks for the air we breathe to anyone but God and before we pledge our faith and loyalty to anyone but the Emperor. So now they stalk me all about, blacken my name with the Emperor and their friends and my neighbors, and spy around for some advantage against me. They want me out of the way, no matter how. That's why you took my page prisoner, because you knew I had sent him to gather information, and that's why he did not behave as he should when he refused to betray me to you. And you, Weislingen, are their tool!

WEISLINGEN. Berlichingen!

GOETZ. Not a word more about it, I am an enemy of explanations, a man betrays himself or someone else, usually both.

CARL. Come to dinner, Papa.

GOETZ. There's good news!—Come, I hope my womenfolk will cheer you up. You used to be quite a lover; the girls knew stories to tell about you. Come on!

*In the Bishop's Palace at Bamberg
The Dininghall*

*Bishop of Bamberg. Abbot of Fulda. Olearius, Doctor of Sacred and
Secular Law. Liebetraut. Courtiers.*

At Table. Dessert and large drinking chalices are brought in.

BISHOP. Are there many German aristocrats now studying at Bologna?

OLEARIUS. Both aristocrats and merchant class. And without exaggeration, they receive the highest praise. There is a common saying at the Academy: "as diligent as a German nobleman." For while the burghers apply themselves with an admirable diligence in order to offset by talent the shortcomings of birth, the others strive, with admirable competitiveness, to exalt their dignity of birth through the most splendid accomplishments.

ABBOT. Aha!

LIEBETRAUT. Just think! What marvels to be known! "As diligent as a German nobleman." In all my days I've never heard that one.

OLEARIUS. Yes, they are a marvel for the whole Academy. Very soon

some of the oldest and most skilled will be returning as *Doctores*. The Emperor will be pleased to appoint them to his courts of law.

BISHOP. That is bound to happen.

ABBOT. Do you know, for instance, a young lord?—he comes from Hessen—

OLEARIUS. There are many Hessians there.

ABBOT. His name is—he's called—Does no one among you know him?—His mother was a von—Oh! his father had only one eye—and was a Marshall.

LIEBETRAUT. Von Wildenholz.

ABBOT. Right! Von Wildenholz.

OLEARIUS. I do know him, a young man of various skills. He is especially praised for his strength in disputation.

ABBOT. He has that from his mother.

LIEBETRAUT. But her husband never wished to praise her for it.

BISHOP. What did you say was the Emperor's name who wrote your *corpus juris*?

OLEARIUS. Justinian.

BISHOP. A worthy lord! To his health!

OLEARIUS. To his memory! (*They drink.*)

ABBOT. It must be a splendid book.

OLEARIUS. One might call it the book of all books. A collection of all laws, for every case the judgment ready at hand, and whatever may still be oblique or obscure is supplemented by glosses, with which the most learned men have decorated that splendid work.

ABBOT. A collection of all laws! Well! Then the Ten Commandments must also be in it.

OLEARIUS. *Implicite* they are, not *explicite*.

ABBOT. That's what I mean, in and by themselves, without further explication.

BISHOP. And best of all, the realm could be maintained, as you say, in secure peace and quiet, wherever this system would be introduced and rightly administered.

OLEARIUS. No question.

BISHOP. To all *Doctores Juris*!

OLEARIUS. I can drink to that. (*They drink.*) Would to God they spoke that way in my homeland.

ABBOT. Where do you come from, most learned Sir?

OLEARIUS. From Frankfurt on the Main, at your Eminence's service.

BISHOP. Are you gentlemen not well thought of there? How can that be?

OLEARIUS. Strange enough. I was there to fetch my inheritance from my father, and the mob all but stoned me when they heard I was a lawyer.

ABBOT. God forbid!

OLEARIUS. This is the reason: the Sheriff's Court, which is held in great

esteem far and wide, is filled with people who are ignorant of Roman Law. No one attains to the dignity of a judge but those who have acquired through age and experience a precise knowledge of the internal and external procedures of the city, along with a strong power of judgment, which applies the past to the present. In this way the sheriffs become living archives, chronicles, books of law, all in one, and they pass judgment on the citizens and neighboring populace by ancient precedent, not by statutes.

ABBOT. That is all for the good.

OLEARIUS. But by far not enough. Human life is short, and in a single generation not all cases occur. Our book of law is a collection of such cases from many centuries. And in addition the will and opinion of men can vary, today something will seem right to one person, which tomorrow displeases another; in this way confusion and injustice are unavoidable. All this is established by laws, and laws are unchangeable.

ABBOT. That of course is better.

OLEARIUS. The common people don't recognize that. However keen for anything new and different, they completely abhor whatever leads them away from their own track, no matter how much they might benefit from it. They regard a lawyer with contempt, as a disruption to the state, a cutpurse, and they are so rabid about it, that no lawyers can settle there.

LIEBETRAUT. You *are* from Frankfurt! I'm well known there myself. At the coronation of Emperor Maximilian we stole a feast on your young swains. Your name is Olearius? I do not recall the name.

OLEARIUS. My father was called Oehlmann. Just to avoid misunderstanding about the title of my Latin writings, I took the name Olearius, on the example and advice of worthy teachers of law.

LIEBETRAUT. You did well to translate yourself. A prophet is without honor in his own country; it might also have applied to you in your mother tongue.

OLEARIUS. It was not for that reason.

LIEBETRAUT. There is more than one reason for every result.

ABBOT. A prophet is without honor in his own country!

LIEBETRAUT. And do you know why, reverend Sir?

ABBOT. Because he was born and brought up there.

LIEBETRAUT. True! That may be one reason. Another is this: Because a close acquaintance with such men dissolves the halo of nobility and holiness, with which the mists of distance surround them like lies; and then they are nothing but little stumps of tallow.

OLEARIUS. It would seem that you are employed for speaking the blunt truth.

LIEBETRAUT. Since I have the head for it, I don't lack the tongue.

OLEARIUS. Just the ability to pronounce it with a certain delicacy.

LIEBETRAUT. Best apply the cupping-glass where it can draw blood.

OLEARIUS. You can recognize a barber-surgeon by his apron, and there's no offence taken for his trade. For your protection you might do well to wear a cap-and-bells.

LIEBETRAUT. Where did you take your degree? I only ask in case sometime the notion strikes me, so I can go straight to the right forge.

OLEARIUS. You are impudent.

LIEBETRAUT. And you are very inflated. (*Bishop and Abbot laugh.*)

BISHOP. Change the subject.—Not so heated, my lords. At table all things are tolerated. Some other discourse, Liebetaut.

LIEBETRAUT. There's a place across from Frankfurt called Sachsenhausen—

OLEARIUS (*to the Bishop*). What's the news from the Turkish campaign, so please your Grace?

BISHOP. The Emperor wishes nothing more than to achieve peace in his realm, to abolish feuding and to secure the authority of the courts. Then, it is said, he will proceed in person against the enemies of the realm and of Christendom. For now his private affairs keep him busy, and the realm, despite some forty local treaties for peace, is still a den of murderers. Franconia, Swabia, the upper Rhineland and adjacent territories are laid waste by bold and impudent knights: Sickingen, Selbitz with his one leg, Berlichingen with his iron hand, they mock the Emperor's authority in those regions.

ABBOT. Indeed, if his Majesty does not do something about it soon, those fellows will end up putting someone in a sack.

LIEBETRAUT. That would be quite a fellow, who could stuff the winecask of Fulda into a sack.

BISHOP. That last fellow in particular has been my implacable enemy for many years, and he annoys me beyond words, but it won't go on much longer, I hope. The Emperor is now holding his court in Augsburg. We have taken our measures, we cannot fail.—Doctor, do you know Adelbert von Weislingen?

OLEARIUS. No, your Eminence.

BISHOP. If you will await the arrival of this man, you will be pleased to behold in one person the noblest, most reasonable and most gallant knight.

OLEARIUS. He must be exceptional, who earns such words of praise from such a mouth.

LIEBETRAUT. He never attended a university.

BISHOP. We know that. (*Servants rush to the windows.*) What is happening?

A SERVANT. Faerber, Weislingen's squire, is just riding through the castle gate.

BISHOP. Go, see what he brings, he'll have news of him.

Liebetaut leaves. They stand up and take another drink. Liebetaut returns.

BISHOP. What's the news?

LIEBETRAUT. I wish someone else might tell you. Weislingen has been captured.

BISHOP. Ah!

LIEBETRAUT. Berlichingen seized him with three of his attendants near Haslach. One of them escaped to report it to you.

ABBOT. A Job's messenger!

OLEARIUS. I'm truly sorry to hear it.

BISHOP. I want to see that squire, bring him up here.—I want to talk to him myself. Bring him to my chamber. (*Leaves.*)

ABBOT (*sits down*). One more cup. (*Servants fill his glass.*)

OLEARIUS. Would your Reverence not enjoy a brief promenade in the garden? *Post coenam stabis seu passus mille meabis.*

LIEBETRAUT. Truly, sitting is not healthy for you. You'll have another stroke. (*The Abbot rises.*)

LIEBETRAUT (*to himself*). If I can just get him outside, I'll tend to his *exercitium*. (*They leave.*)

Jaxthausen
Maria. Weislingen.

MARIA. You say that you love me. I gladly believe you and hope that I will make you happy.

WEISLINGEN. I feel nothing but my love for you. (*He embraces her.*)

MARIA. I beg you, please don't. I gladly offer a kiss as a sample, but you seem to want to take possession already of what will be yours only on condition.

WEISLINGEN. You are too strict, Maria! The innocence of love is a delight to the Deity, never an insult.

MARIA. That may be! But I don't find it edifying to hear it. I was taught that caresses are as strong as chains, which they resemble, and that young women when in love are weaker than Samson after he lost his locks.

WEISLINGEN. Who taught you that?

MARIA. The Abbess of my convent. I was with her until my sixteenth year, and the happiness I felt in her presence I feel again only with you. She had loved and knew how to speak of it. She had a heart full of feeling! She was a splendid woman.

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WEISLINGEN. Then she resembled you! (*He takes her hand.*) How will I endure it, if I must leave you!

MARIA (*withdraws her hand*). With a bit of pain, I hope, for I know how I will be. But you must leave.

WEISLINGEN. Yes, my dearest, and I will. For I sense what bliss I may win through this sacrifice. Blessings on your brother, and the day on which he set out to take me prisoner.

MARIA. His heart was filled with hope for you and for myself. "Farewell!," he said as he left, "I will see that I find him again."

WEISLINGEN. And he has. How I wish that the management of my estates and their security had not been neglected by my wretched life at court! You could be mine at once.

MARIA. Postponement also has its pleasures.

WEISLINGEN. Do not say that, Maria, otherwise I'd fear you feel less strongly than I do. But I shall do deserving penance, and what hopes will accompany me at every step! To be wholly yours, to live only with you and your circle of good people, removed from the world, to enjoy all the bliss which two such hearts may provide for each other! What is the grace of a prince, what the applause of the world, compared to such simple, singular happiness? I have hoped and wished for so much, this surpasses all my hopes and wishes.

Goetz enters.

GOETZ. Your page has returned. He could hardly speak for fatigue and hunger. My wife is giving him something to eat. This much I have understood: the Bishop won't release my squire, there's supposed to be an Imperial Commission appointed and a day set aside when the affair will be settled. Be that as it may, Adelbert, you are free to leave; I ask only your hand in pledge that in future you will not assist my enemies, neither publicly nor in private.

WEISLINGEN. Give me your hand. From this moment on may friendship and trust, like an immutable law of nature, be unchanging between us. At the same time allow me to take this hand (*he takes Maria's hand*) and the possession of this noblest young woman.

GOETZ. May I say yes for you?

MARIA. If you will say it with me.

GOETZ. It's lucky that for once advantage coincides for both of us. No need to blush! Your glances are proof enough. Well then, Weislingen! Clasp hands together and let me say Amen!—My friend and brother!—I thank you, sister! You know how to spin more than flax. You've twisted the thread that's snared this bird of paradise. You don't quite look free, Adelbert! What's the matter? Myself—I'm completely happy: what I could hope for only in dreams is now real, and I feel I'm dreaming. Ah! now my dream is over. It seemed this

night as if I gave you my iron hand, my right one, and you held me so tightly that it came loose from my brassarts, as if it were broken off. It frightened me and woke me up. I should have kept on dreaming, then I'd have seen how you provided me with a new, living hand.—Now you must be gone to set your castle and estates in perfect order. The damned court made you neglect both. I must call my wife. Elisabeth!

MARIA. My brother is filled with joy.

WEISLINGEN. And yet I can challenge him for that distinction.

GOETZ. You'll have a charming place to live.

MARIA. Franconia is blessed land.

WEISLINGEN. And I may truly say, my castle stands in its most blessed and charming region.

GOETZ. That you may, and I will affirm it. Here flows the Main and there the hill rises gradually, clothed in tilled fields and vineyards and crowned by your castle, then the river quickly twists round the bend behind the rock of your castle. The windows of the great hall open on the steep drop to the water, a view to the distance many hours away.

Elisabeth enters.

ELISABETH. What are you up to?

GOETZ. You must join your hand with ours and wish God's blessing on these two. They're engaged.

ELISABETH. So quickly.

GOETZ. Yet not unexpectedly.

ELISABETH. May you always desire her as you have while wooing her! And more! May you be as happy as your love for her endures.

WEISLINGEN. Amen! I wish for no joy but on these terms.

GOETZ. The bridegroom, dear wife, must undertake a short journey; for a great change draws many smaller ones after. He must first withdraw from the Bishop's court, to allow that friendship gradually to grow cold. Then he must rescue his properties from the hands of self-serving tenants. And then—but come, sister, Elisabeth!, come away. We'll leave him alone. His page no doubt has private business to convey.

WEISLINGEN. Nothing that you may not know.

GOETZ. No need. Franconians and Swabians! You're more closely related now than ever. And how we'll keep a hold on those princes! (*The three leave.*)

WEISLINGEN. Dear God in Heaven! that you could provide such bliss for one so undeserving. It overwhelms me. How dependent I was on wretched people I thought I controlled, on favors from my prince, on the flattery of sycophants at court. Goetz, dear Goetz, you have restored me to myself, and Maria, you make my change of heart complete. I feel as free as if I breathed the open air. Bamberg I wish to see

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no more. I will cut loose from all those shameful bonds that kept me beneath my true self. My spirit soars, here is nothing of that ponderous struggle for a greatness denied. And so it's certain that he alone is joyful and great who needs neither to command nor to obey in order to be something.

Franz enters.

FRANZ. God's greeting, my noble Lord! I bring so many messages that I scarcely know how to begin. Bamberg and its environs for ten miles around send you a thousandfold: God's greeting!

WEISLINGEN. Welcome, Franz. What else do you bring?

FRANZ. Your place in the memory of the court and everywhere is beyond what I can say.

WEISLINGEN. That won't last long.

FRANZ. As long as you live! and after your death it will shine more brightly than the brass lettering on a tombstone. How they all took your misfortune to heart!

WEISLINGEN. What did the Bishop say?

FRANZ. He was so eager for news that with the busy speed of his questioning he prevented my answering. He already knew about it, since Faerber, who escaped from Haslach, brought him that message. But he wanted to know everything. He asked very anxiously whether you had been wounded. I said, "He's all right, from the hair on the top of his head to the toenails on his little toe."

WEISLINGEN. What did he say about the proposals?

FRANZ. He was ready to turn over everything at once, the squire and money as well, just so that you would be freed. But when he heard that you could be released without it, and your word alone would be weighed as equal to the boy, then he absolutely insisted that the struggle with Berlichingen be postponed. He told me a hundred things to say to you, I've forgotten them. It was a long sermon on a single text: "I can't do without Weislingen."

WEISLINGEN. He'll have to learn how!

FRANZ. What do you mean? He said, "Make him hurry, everything waits upon him."

WEISLINGEN. Let it wait. I am not returning to the court.

FRANZ. Not to the court? Lord! What makes you say that? If you only knew what I know. If you could but dream what I have seen.

WEISLINGEN. What happened to you?

FRANZ. Just the memory of it is enough to make me lose control. Bamberg is Bamberg no longer, an angel in woman's form has transformed it into the antechamber of heaven.

WEISLINGEN. Nothing more?

FRANZ. I'll turn priest if you see her and don't lose your mind.

WEISLINGEN. Who is she then?

FRANZ. Adelheid von Walldorf.

WEISLINGEN. Her! I've heard a lot about her beauty.

FRANZ. Heard! That's as much as saying, I've seen music. It is just as impossible for the tongue to express the line of her perfections, since the eye itself in her presence is not good enough.

WEISLINGEN. You're not making sense.

FRANZ. That may be. That last time I saw her I had no more control of my senses than a drunkard. Or rather, let me say, I felt at that moment the way the saints must feel in the presence of a heavenly vision. All my senses stronger, more exalted and more complete, and yet the use of none.

WEISLINGEN. That is strange.

FRANZ. When I took my leave from the Bishop, she was with him. They were playing chess. He was very gracious, gave me his hand to kiss and said a great deal to me, much of it I didn't hear. For I was gazing at the lady beside him, she had fixed her eyes on the chess board, as if she were planning a masterstroke. A fine, calculating expression upon her mouth and cheeks! I would have liked to be the ivory chess king. Nobility and friendliness were blended in her brow. And the blinding light of her face and breast, offset by her dark hair!

WEISLINGEN. The sight has turned you into a poet.

FRANZ. In that moment I can feel what makes a poet, a full heart, filled with one single emotion. When the Bishop had ended and I bowed to him, she looked at me and said: "From me, too—greetings from a stranger! Tell him he should come quickly. New friends are waiting for him, he should not despise them, even though he may be so rich in old ones."—I wanted to answer something, but the passage between heart and tongue was blocked. I bowed my head. I would have sacrificed all my possessions to be allowed to kiss the tip of her little finger! While I was standing there, the Bishop dropped a pawn, I reached down to pick it up and in doing so touched the hem of her dress; that sent shock waves all through my limbs, and I have no idea how I managed to get out through the door.

WEISLINGEN. Is her husband at court?

FRANZ. She has been a widow for four months. She is staying in Bamberg to be distracted. You will see her. When she looks at you, it's as if you were standing in the sunlight of spring.

WEISLINGEN. It would have a weaker effect on me.

FRANZ. I hear you are as good as married.

WEISLINGEN. Would that I already were. My gentle Maria will make my life a happiness. Her sweet soul is mirrored in her blue eyes. And like an angel from heaven, formed of innocence and love, wisely she guides my heart toward peace and happiness. Pack up my things! And then to my castle! I do not wish to see Bamberg, even if St. Vitus in person bid me to come. (*He leaves.*)

FRANZ. God forbid! We'll hope for the best! Maria is loving and beautiful, and I can't blame a prisoner and a sick man for falling in love with her. In her eyes there is solace, a congenial melancholy.—But surrounding you, Adelheid, there is life, fire, courage—What I would do!—I am a fool—One glance from her made me that way. My Lord must go there! I must go there! And then I'll gaze on her until I recover my senses again or else go quite mad.

ACT II

Bamberg

A Hall

The Bishop, Adelheid, playing chess. Liebetraut with a zither. Ladies and Courtiers gathered around them by the fireplace.

LIEBETRAUT (*plays and sings*).

Young Cupid flew hither
With bow and with quiver,
His torch like a brand,
To vaunt in the battle
His masculine mettle,
His conquering hand.

Up! Up!

On! On!

His weapons were clashing
His winglets were flashing,
His eyes, how they burned!

And here he found bosoms—
Alas, they were bare;
And laps here to sit on;
They welcomed him there.
He shook all his arrows
Right into the flames.
They cradled him, squeezed him,
And played loving games.

Heigh, eigh, ho, popeio!

ADELHEID. You're not concentrating on the game. Check to your king!

BISHOP. There is still a way out.

ADELHEID. But not for long. Check to your king!

LIEBETRAUT. This is not a game I'd play, were I a great lord; I'd ban it in the court and in all the land.

ADELHEID. It's true, this game is a test for the brain.

LIEBETRAUT. Not for that! I'd rather hear the toll of the funeral bell and the cry of ominous birds, rather the barking of the angry watchdog Conscience, rather hear them even through a deep sleep, than to hear from your knights, your bishops and your other beasts that eternal: "Check to the king!"

BISHOP. Who could ever have thought that up!

LIEBETRAUT. Someone for example who was weak and had a strong conscience, as often they go together. They call it a royal game and claim it was invented for a king, who rewarded the inventor with an ocean of largess. If that is true, I feel that I see him before me. He was a minor in wits or in years, the ward of his mother or his wife, had baby hair in his beard and flax at his temples, he was as pliable as a willow-shoot and liked to play checkers and with the ladies, not out of passion—God forbid!—but to pass the time. His tutor, too active for a scholar, too inflexible for a man of the world, invented the game *in usum Delphini*, thus making it so like his Majesty—and so on.

ADELHEID. Checkmate! Liebetraut, you should fill in the gaps of our history books.

They stand up.

LIEBETRAUT. The gaps of our genealogies—that would be more profitable. Ever since the deeds of our ancestors have served the same purpose as their portraits, namely to decorate the empty walls of our rooms and our characters, there would be profit in it.

BISHOP. He won't come, you say!

ADELHEID. I beg you, put it out of your mind.

BISHOP. What could it be?

LIEBETRAUT. What? The causes can be prayed off like rosary beads. He has fallen into a kind of contrition, which I could cure him of in a hurry.

BISHOP. Do that, go to him.

LIEBETRAUT. My assignment?

BISHOP. No restrictions. Spare nothing, if you can bring him back.

LIEBETRAUT. May I also involve you, my Lady?

ADELHEID. With discretion.

LIEBETRAUT. That is a broad assignment.

ADELHEID. Do you know me so little, or are you too young to know the right tone for speaking to Weislingen about me?

LIEBETRAUT. With the tone of a bird-call, I should think.

ADELHEID. You'll never learn to be sensible.

LIEBETRAUT. Does one ever learn that, dear Lady?

BISHOP. Go on, go on. Take the best horse from my stable, choose your squires, and bring him here to me!

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LIEBETRAUT. If I cannot conjure him hither, then say that an old woman who cures warts and freckles knows more about sympathetic magic than I.

BISHOP. What good will that do! Berlichingen has taken him in completely. If he comes to us, he will want to leave again.

LIEBETRAUT. Want to, no question, but whether he can. The handshake of a prince and the smile of a beautiful woman! No Weislingen will get free of those. I hasten to take my leave of your Grace.

BISHOP. A happy journey.

ADELHEID. Adieu. (*He leaves.*)

BISHOP. Once he is here I leave it to you.

ADELHEID. Do you want to use me as bird-bait?

BISHOP. Not at all.

ADELHEID. As a decoy then?

BISHOP. No, that's Liebetraut's role. I beg you, do not refuse me what no one else can grant.

ADELHEID. We'll see.

Jaxthausen
Hanns von Selbitz. Goetz.

SELBITZ. Everyone will praise you for proclaiming a feud against those Nurembergers.

GOETZ. It would have destroyed me if I had failed to repay them for very long. It's come to light, they betrayed my squire to the Bambergers. They'd better not forget me.

SELBITZ. They have an old grievance against you.

GOETZ. And I against them, I'm even pleased that they made the first move.

SELBITZ. The imperial cities and the clergy have already sided together.

GOETZ. They have a reason to.

SELBITZ. We'll try to make things hot for them in Hell.

GOETZ. I was counting on you. Would to God the burgomaster of Nuremberg with his golden chain around his neck might fall into our net; with all his wit he'd be in for a surprise.

SELBITZ. I hear Weislingen is on our side again. Will he join us?

GOETZ. Not yet, there's a reason why he can't yet openly give us his support; but for the while it's enough that he's not against us. Without him the priest is no better than the vestments are without the priest.

SELBITZ. When do we set out?

GOETZ. Tomorrow or the day after. Soon there'll be merchants from Bamberg and Nuremberg coming from the Frankfurt Fair. It will bring us a good catch.

SELBITZ. God willing. (*They leave.*)

Bamberg
Adelheid's Room
Adelheid. Lady-in-Waiting.

ADELHEID. He's here, you say! I hardly believe it.

LADY. If I had not seen him myself, I would say I doubted it.

ADELHEID. The Bishop should mount Liebetraut in gold, he has achieved a masterpiece.

LADY. I saw him as he was about to ride into the castle, he was mounted on a white horse. As it approached the bridge it shied and wouldn't budge from the spot. The people came running down all the streets to see him. They enjoyed the horse's bad behavior. On all sides he was greeted, and he thanked them all. He sat his mount with an easy indifference, and with flattery and threats he finally forced it into the gate, Liebetraut with him and just a few squires.

ADELHEID. How does he please you?

LADY. As few men have. He looked like the Emperor here (*points to a portrait of Maximilian*), as if he were his son. The nose a bit smaller, just such friendly, light-brown eyes, just such beautiful blond hair, and built like a statue. A bit of sadness in his face—I don't know—it was very attractive!

ADELHEID. I'm curious to see him.

LADY. That would be a Lord for you.

ADELHEID. Fool!

LADY. Children and fools—

Liebetraut enters.

LIEBETRAUT. Now, dear Lady, what have I earned?

ADELHEID. A cuckold's horns from your wife. For to judge by this you must have already cajoled many a neighbor's honest housewife away from her duty.

LIEBETRAUT. Not so, dear Lady! Into her duty, you mean to say; for if it ever happened, then I cajoled her into her husband's bed.

ADELHEID. How did you manage to bring him here?

LIEBETRAUT. You know only too well how to catch a woodcock; do I have to teach you my little tricks as well?—First, I acted as if I knew nothing, understood nothing about his conduct, and placed him at the disadvantage of having to tell the whole story. Right away, I saw it all from a different side than he, couldn't understand—couldn't see—and so forth. Then I spoke about Bamberg, everything all at once, great and small, awakened certain memories, and once I got his imagination working, I managed to connect a number of threads which I found torn. He did not know what was happening to him, felt a new longing toward Bamberg, he wanted to—without wanting to. When he turned to his own heart and tried to work it all out, when he was

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much too concerned with himself to take care for himself, I slipped a line around his neck woven with three powerful strands: women, princely favor, and flattery, and with that I dragged him here.

ADELHEID. What did you say about me?

LIEBETRAUT. The simple truth. That you were having difficulties with your estates—were hoping, since he counts for so much with the Emperor, that he could easily end that for you.

ADELHEID. Fine.

LIEBETRAUT. The Bishop will bring him to you.

ADELHEID. I shall await them. (*Liebetraut leaves.*) With feelings such as I've seldom felt, in awaiting a visit.

*In the Spessart
Berlichingen. Selbitz. Georg as squire.*

GOETZ. You didn't find him, Georg?

GEORG. The day before he had ridden with Liebetraut to Bamberg and two squires with him.

GOETZ. I can't see what that's all about.

SELBITZ. I can. Your reconciliation was a bit too hasty to last for long. Liebetraut is a clever fellow, he's let himself be hoodwinked by him.

GOETZ. Do you believe he'll break his bond?

SELBITZ. The first step has been taken.

GOETZ. I don't believe it. Who knows what need there was to go to court; they still are in his debt there; let's hope for the best.

SELBITZ. Would God he deserves it and might do what's best!

GOETZ. A plan occurs to me. We'll have Georg put on that captured cloak from the Bamberg trooper and give him the safe-conduct pass; let him ride to Bamberg and see how things stand.

GEORG. I've long hoped for that.

GOETZ. It's your first mission. Be careful, boy! I'd be sorry if you met with an accident.

GEORG. Don't worry, I don't care how many men I find crawling around me, to me it's only like rats and mice. (*He leaves.*)

*Bamberg
The Bishop. Weislingen.*

BISHOP. You do not wish to be kept here longer?

WEISLINGEN. You would not ask that I break my oath.

BISHOP. I could have asked that you not swear it. What sort of spirit possessed you? Could I not have set you free without that? Do I count for so little at the Imperial Court?

WEISLINGEN. It is done; forgive me if you can.

BISHOP. I do not comprehend at all what required you to take such a

step! Why renounce me? Were there not a hundred other conditions by which to get free? Do we not hold his squire? Wouldn't I have given money enough to quiet him down again? Our operations against him and his companions would have gone on.—Ah, I forget that I am talking with his friend, who is now working against me and can easily defuse the mines which he himself put in place.

WEISLINGEN. Gracious Lord!

BISHOP. And yet—now that I see your face again, hear your voice. It's not possible, not possible!

WEISLINGEN. Farewell, gracious Lord.

BISHOP. I give you my blessing. Formerly, whenever we parted, I said: "Till we meet again." Now—God willing, we'll never see each other again.

WEISLINGEN. There's a lot that can change.

BISHOP. Alas, there's too much that has changed already. Perhaps I will see you once again, as an enemy before my walls, laying waste my fields, which now have you to thank that they are in full bloom.

WEISLINGEN. No, gracious Lord.

BISHOP. You cannot say No. The secular estates, my neighbors, all are out to get me. As long as I had you—Go, Weislingen! I have nothing more to say to you. You have undone a great deal. Go!

WEISLINGEN. And I do not know what to say. (*Bishop leaves.*)

Enter Franz.

FRANZ. Adelheid is waiting for you. She is not well. But she does not want to let you go without saying goodbye.

WEISLINGEN. Come.

FRANZ. Are we really leaving?

WEISLINGEN. This very evening.—

FRANZ. I feel as if I were taking leave of the world.

WEISLINGEN. So do I, and as if I didn't know where I was going either.

Adelheid's Room

Adelheid. Lady.

LADY. You're looking pale, dear Lady.

ADELHEID. —I don't love him, and yet I wish he would stay. You see, I could live with him, even if I do not yet want him as a husband.

LADY. Do you believe he's going?

ADELHEID. He's gone to the Bishop to take his leave.

LADY. After that he still has a hard stand to make.

ADELHEID. What do you mean?

LADY. How can you ask, dear Lady? You caught his heart on your hook, and if he wants to tear himself free, he'll bleed to death.

(continued...)