

German Short Stories of the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries
Wilhelm Hauff (1802-1827)

The Young Englishman

(From: 'The Sheik of Alexandra and his Slaves,' 1826)

“Sire! I am a German by birth and have lived in your lands too short a time to be able to tell a Persian fairy-tale or a delightful story of Sultans and Viziers. You will therefore need to permit me to tell you something from my native land, which might perhaps afford you some amusement. Unfortunately, our stories are not always so refined as yours, that is to say, they do not treat of Sultans (Kings to us), nor of Viziers or Pashas, which we call Ministers of Justice and Ministers of Finance, also Privy Councillors and the like; but their milieu, when they are not concerned with soldiers, is usually quite humble and bourgeois.

In the southern part of Germany lies the small town of Grünwiesel, where I was born and bred. It is a small town like every other. In the centre, it has a small marketplace with a fountain; at one side of this, a little old Town Hall; around the marketplace, the houses of the Justice of the Peace and the most prominent merchants; and in a few narrow streets, there live the rest of the people. Everybody knows each other, everybody knows what is going on in this house and that, and if the Rector or the mayor or the doctor has an extra dish on their table, the whole town knows it before lunch is over. Then, in the afternoon, the ladies assemble, paying each other “*visites*” as they call them and gossiping about this great event over strong coffee and sweet cake, and the conclusion drawn is that the Rector

probably bought a lottery ticket and won an unchristian amount, that the mayor had had his palms greased, or that the doctor had been given some pieces of gold by the apothecary to prescribe tremendously expensive medicines. You can imagine, Sire, how disagreeable it was for such a well-regulated town as Grünwiesel when a man moved there, about whom nobody knew whence he came, what he wanted, or what means he lived on. The mayor, it is true, had seen his passport, a paper that everyone in our land must have.”

“Is it then so unsafe on the roads,” the Sheik interrupted the slave, “that you must have a firman from your Sultan to induce robbers to respect your person?”

“No, Sire,” he replied, “these papers keep no thieves away from us; it is rather for the sake of public order, so that people in every people know whom they have among them.

“Now, the mayor had examined the passport, and he declared, at a coffee-party at the doctor’s house, that the passport was, admittedly, quite correctly endorsed with a visa from Berlin to Grünwiesel, but there was more to it than met the eye; for the man had a somewhat suspicious appearance. The mayor having great standing in the town, it was no wonder that the stranger was regarded as a doubtful character from that time on. And his mode of life did nothing to dissuade my compatriots from this opinion. For several pieces of gold, the stranger rented all of a house which had hitherto stood empty. He had a whole cartload of peculiar implements brought in, such as stoves, burners, large crucibles and the like, and lived altogether alone from that time on. Indeed, he was even his

own cook, and no human soul entered his house except for an old man from Grünwiesel who was charged to buy bread, meat, and vegetables for him. Yet even this man was only allowed into the hallway, where the stranger would take possession of the purchased articles.

I was a boy of ten years of age when the man came to reside in my native town, and I can still remember today, as though it had happened but yesterday, the disturbance that this man caused in the small town. He did not go to the bowling-ground in the afternoon as other men did, nor did he go to the tavern in the evening, like the others, to discuss the news over a pipe of tobacco. In vain did the mayor, the Justice of the Peace, the doctor and the Rector invite him, in turn, to dinner or coffee; he invariably sent his regrets. Thus it was that some people took him to be mad, others for a Jew, while a third party obstinately maintained that he was a magician or a sorcerer. I reached my eighteenth, twentieth year, and still the man was known in the town as the strange gentleman.

Now it happened one day that people came to the town with exotic animals. It was that itinerant rabble who have a camel that can make a bow, a dancing-bear, and some dogs and apes which look comical enough in human clothes and perform all kinds of tricks. These people usually pass through the town, stopping at the cross-streets and squares, where they make discordant music with a little drum and a pipe, have their troupe dance and leap around, and then collect money from the neighbouring houses. But the troupe which appeared in Grünwiesel on this occasion was distinguished by an immense orangutan, who was almost man-sized, walked on two legs, and knew all kinds of clever tricks. This canine and

simian comedy also came before the house of the stranger; he initially appeared quite indignant, behind the dark, age-clouded windows, when the drums and pipes sounded out; but he soon brightened up, looked out of the window, to everyone's amazement, and laughed heartily at the orangutan's tricks; indeed, he gave such a large silver coin for the buffoonery that the whole town spoke of it.

On the next morning, the animal troupe moved on; the camel had to carry many baskets, in which the dogs and apes sat quite comfortably, while the animal drivers and the great ape walked behind it. But a few hours had barely passed since they walked out the gate when the stranger sent to the posthouse desiring a coach with post-horses, to the great surprise of the postmaster; he then drove out the same gate, down the road that the animals had taken. The whole town was vexed that nobody could find out where he had gone. It was night before the stranger arrived back before the gate in the coach; but another person was sitting in the coach, who had drawn his hat far over his face and tied a silk scarf around his mouth and ears. The gatekeeper considered it his duty to address the other stranger and to request his passport; however, he answered very rudely, muttering in a quite unintelligible language.

"He is my nephew," the stranger affably told the gatekeeper while pressing several silver coins into his hand, "he is my nephew and understands very little German to date; a moment ago, he cursed a little, in his dialect, at our being held up."

"Oh, if he is your nephew, sir," the gatekeeper replied, "then he may of course enter without a pass; he will live with you, without doubt?"

“Certainly,” said the stranger, “and will most likely stay here for some time.”

The gatekeeper had no further objections, and the stranger and his nephew drove into the small town. The mayor and the entire town, incidentally, were not very well satisfied with the gatekeeper. He really should have taken notice of at least some words of the nephew’s language; from that, one could easily have found out which country was home to him and his uncle. The gatekeeper asserted that it was neither French nor Italian, but it had sounded more or less like English, and if he were not mistaken, the young gentleman had said, “Goddam!” In this way did the gatekeeper help himself out of a scrape, and the young man to a name: for people now spoke of nothing but the Young Englishman in the small town.

But the Young Englishman did not show his face, neither on the bowling-ground nor in the beer-cellar; yet he did keep people occupied in another way. – To be precise: it often happened that dreadful screams and a din broke out from the formerly so silent house, causing people to collect in crowds outside it, their necks craned up. Then the Young Englishman was seen attired in a red frock-coat and green breeches, with shaggy hair and a terrible expression on his face, running by the windows, back and forth through all the rooms, with incredible speed; the old stranger ran after him in a red dressing-gown, a hunting-whip in his hand, often missing him, but on some occasions it seemed to the crowd in the street that he must have caught the youth: for one heard many a pitiable cry of anguish and smacking lash of the whip. The ladies of the small town took so lively an interest in this cruel treatment of the young foreigner that they finally

induced the mayor to take steps in the matter. He wrote the stranger a note in which he upbraided him for the disgraceful treatment of his nephew in quite harsh terms and threatened him that he would, if such scenes were further to occur, take the young man under his particular protection.

Who could have been more astonished than the mayor, when he saw the stranger himself, for the first time in ten years, enter his house? The old gentleman excused his conduct with the express directions of the youth's parents, who had given him their son to raise. He was generally a clever, tractable young man, the gentleman remarked, but he learned languages with great difficulty; he wished so fervently to teach his nephew to become truly fluent in German, in order to subsequently take the liberty of introducing him into the society of Grünwiesel, and yet the language was so difficult for the youth to acquire that there was often no other recourse less than to soundly whip his hide. The mayor, being thoroughly satisfied with this explanation, advised moderation to the old man, and in the beer-cellar that evening, he related that seldom had he found so informed, so charming a man as the stranger. "It's just a shame," he added, "that he comes into society so little; I think, however, that once the nephew can speak a little German, he will visit my receptions more often."

This single occurrence completely transformed the opinion of the small town. People looked upon the stranger as a charming man, desired his closer acquaintance, and found it quite in the natural order of things when a frightful shriek broke out of the desolate house every now and then. "He is giving his nephew instruction in German grammar," said the people of Grünwiesel, and they stayed before his house no longer. After

about a quarter of a year, the instruction in German seemed to be completed, for the old man now proceeded a step farther. An old and infirm Frenchman lived in the town who gave dancing lessons to the young people. The stranger sent for this man and told him that he wished to have his nephew given instruction in dancing. He gave him to understand that the youth was, indeed, very docile but, where dancing was concerned, somewhat wilful; the thing was, he had formerly learned to dance with another master, learning in particular such singular figures that he could not with propriety be produced in society. But the nephew considered himself, on that very account, to be a great dancer, even though his dance did not bear the remotest resemblance to the waltz or galop (dances which people dance in my native land, O Sire!), nor even any resemblance to an Écossaise or a Française. He promised, moreover, a dollar for each lesson, and the dancing-master was ready and happy to undertake the instruction of the wilful pupil.

There was, as the Frenchman privately declared, nothing in the world more singular than these dancing-lessons. The nephew, a quite tall, slim young man, just very short in the leg, would appear in a red frock-coat, his hair handsomely dressed, in wide green breeches and kid gloves. He spoke little, and with a foreign accent, and was initially quite well-behaved and tractable; but then he would often descend into grotesque leaps, and dance the most daring figures, in the process making entrechats that caused the dancing-master's head to swim. When he attempted to set him right, the nephew would pull the elegant dancing-shoes off his feet, throw them at the Frenchman's head, and begin to leap

around the room on all fours. At this noise, the old gentleman suddenly burst out of his room in a wide, red dressing-gown, a cap of gold paper on his head, and bring the hunting-whip down rather roughly on his nephew's back. The nephew then struck up a terrible howling and leapt up onto tables and tall chests of drawers, even onto the crosspieces of the windows, speaking a strange, foreign language. But the old man in the red dressing-gown was not to be put off, and grabbing his leg, he pulled him down, gave him a sound thrashing, and drew his cravat tighter by means of a buckle, whereupon he became compliant and well-behaved again, and the dancing lesson proceeded without further interruption.



But when the dancing-master had brought his pupil to the point where music could be added to the lesson, the nephew was like a new man. A town-musician was hired and had to sit on a table in the salon of the desolate house. The dancing-master then played the part of the lady, the old gentleman having him put on a silk gown and an East India shawl; the nephew invited him to dance and then began to waltz with him. He, however, was an indefatigable, maniacal dancer, who did not let the master out of his long arms; groan or yell as he would, he had to dance, until he sank down exhausted or the town musician's arm grew stiff at the fiddle. These lessons almost brought the dancing-master to his grave, but the dollar he received, duly paid each time, and the good wine that the old man served up, induced him to keep coming back, even though he had firmly resolved the day before never to set foot in the desolate house again.

The people in Grünwiesel viewed the matter in a quite different light from the Frenchman. They found the young man to have a great aptitude for social life, and the ladies of the little town, severely lacking gentlemen as they did, rejoiced to have so nimble a dancer for the coming winter.

One morning, the maids returning from market related an extraordinary occurrence to their masters and mistresses. A magnificent glass-coach drawn by handsome horses had pulled up in front of the desolate house, and a servant in sumptuous livery had held the coach-door open. The door of the desolate house had then opened and two finely dressed gentlemen had stepped out, one of them being the old stranger and the other probably the young gentleman, who had learned German

with such a struggle and was such a maniacal dancer. Both had climbed into the coach, the servant had leapt onto the board at the back, and the coach – just imagine this – had driven directly to the mayor’s house.

When the women heard this from their maids, they hastily tore off their kitchen-aprons and their somewhat unclean caps and changed into their best clothes. “Nothing can be more certain,” they said to their families, while everyone ran around tidying up the reception-room, which was also put to other uses, “Nothing can be more certain than that the stranger is now going to bring his nephew out. The old fool has, for ten years, not had the decency to set foot in our house, but he shall be forgiven for the sake of his nephew, who must be a charming person.” With these words, they exhorted their sons and daughters to look very well-mannered when the stranger arrived, to stand up straight and use more correct pronunciation than they habitually did. And the shrewd ladies in the little town were not wrong in their surmise; for the old gentleman drove the rounds with his nephew to commend himself and him to the good graces of the families.

People everywhere raved about the two strangers and regretted not having made this agreeable acquaintance earlier. The old gentleman showed himself to be a worthy, intelligent man, who did, it was true, give a little smile every time he spoke, so that one was not certain whether he was in earnest or not, but he spoke about the weather, the region, the summer entertainment at the beer-cellar on the mountain, in so clever and considered a manner that everyone was enchanted by his words. But the nephew! He captivated everyone; he won every heart.

Now one could not, where his appearance was concerned, call his

face handsome; the lower part, particularly the lower jaw, jutted out altogether too much, and his complexion was very swarthy; he also made all kinds of singular grimaces every now and then, closing his eyes, and baring his teeth; but people found the cut of his features uncommonly interesting nonetheless. Nothing could be more flexible, more elegant, than his figure. His clothes did admittedly hang rather strangely on his body, but everything became him splendidly; he moved about the room with great vivacity, threw himself now onto the sofa, now into an easy-chair, and stretched out his legs; but what one would have found highly vulgar and unseemly in any other young man was regarded as genius in the nephew.

“He is an Englishman,” people said, “they are all like that; an Englishman can lie down on the sofa and fall asleep while ten ladies have no seat and have to stand around, you cannot take such a thing ill of an Englishman.” He was very obedient to the old gentleman, his uncle; for when he began to jump around in the room or, as he liked to do, draw his feet up onto the chair, then a stern look sufficed to bring him to order. And how could anyone take something like this ill of him, especially since the uncle said to the lady of every house: “My nephew is still a little rough and unsophisticated; but I have high hopes that society will form and fashion him properly, and I commend him to you, in particular, most earnestly.”

In this way, the nephew was introduced to the world, and on this and the following days all Grünwiesel spoke of nothing but this event. But the old gentleman did not stop at this; he seemed to have completely changed his way of thinking and mode of living. In the afternoon, he went out with his nephew to the rock-cellar on the mountain, where the more

respectable gentleman of Grünwiesel drank beer and took their pleasure in playing ninepins. The nephew there showed himself to be a skilful hand at the game; for he never knocked down fewer than five or six. Now and then, a singular humour seemed to come over him: he would suddenly hit upon the notion of running along with the ball, as swift as an arrow, into the midst of the ninepins, where he cut all kinds of wild capers; or, when he knocked down a twelve-ringer or a full-house, he suddenly stood on his beautifully coiffured head and stuck his legs up in the air; or, when a coach drove past, he would be seated up on the coach-top before anybody knew what was happening, making grimaces at those below. He rode thus a little way and then came bounding back to the company.

At such scenes, the old gentleman would deeply beg pardon of the mayor and the other men for his nephew's rude manners; but they laughed, charged it to his youth, claimed to have had such itchy feet themselves at his age, and loved the young harum-scarum, as they called him, uncommonly.

However, there were also times when they were not a little vexed at him, and yet did not dare to say anything, for the Young Englishman was considered to be a model of good breeding and good sense. It was as follows: the old gentleman was in the habit of going with this nephew to the Golden Stag, the small town's inn, in the evening. Although the nephew was still a very young man, he acted quite the elder, sitting down behind his glass, putting on a pair of enormous spectacles, pulling out a mighty pipe, lighting it and smoking the most furiously of all. Now if the conversation turned to the newspapers, to war and peace, and the doctor

gave this opinion, the mayor that one, and the other gentleman were utterly astonished at such deep political knowledge, then the nephew might suddenly take it into his head to hold an entirely different opinion; he would bring his hand, from which he never removed its glove, down on the table, and tell the mayor and the doctor in no uncertain terms that they had no exact knowledge of all these matters, that what he had heard was completely different and he possessed a more profound insight. He then, in strangely broken German, divulged his opinion, which everyone found quite excellent, to the great vexation of the mayor; for being an Englishman, he must naturally know everything better.

If the mayor and the doctor, feeling an anger that they durst not express, then sat down to a game of chess, the nephew would move up, look over the mayor's shoulder with his great spectacles and criticise this or that move, and tell the doctor he had to move such and such, making both men boil with secret rage. If the mayor then angrily challenged him to a game, thinking to soundly checkmate him, for he held himself to be a second Philidor,¹ then the old gentleman would tighten the nephew's cravat, whereupon the latter became quite compliant and well-behaved, and checkmated the mayor.

Up to that time in Grünwiesel, people had played at cards almost every evening, at half a kreutzer a game; the nephew found this a pitiful amount and staked crown-dollars and ducats, maintaining that not a single soul could play as cleverly as he did. But he usually appeased the

¹ François-André Danican (1726-95), composer and chess player.

offended gentlemen by losing vast sums to them. They had not the slightest qualms of conscience in taking heaps of money from him; for they said, "Why, he's an Englishman, so he was born rich," and shovelled the ducats into their pockets. And so the stranger's nephew came, before long, to enjoy an uncommon esteem in the town and surrounding region. Not in living memory could one recall having seen a young man of this kind in Grünwiesel, and it was the most singular phenomenon ever observed. It could not be said that the nephew had learned anything, except, perhaps, to dance. Latin and Greek were, as the saying goes, "Bohemian villages" to him. In a party game at the mayor's house, he was required to write something, and it was discovered that he could not even write his name; in geography, he made the most egregious howlers, transposing a German town to France or a Danish one to Poland without batting an eyelid; he had seen nothing, studied nothing, and the Rector often shook his head gravely at the rude ignorance of the young man. And yet, people found everything that he did or said to be splendid; for he was so shameless as always to insist that he was right, and every one of his remarks wound up with: "I know better!"

Winter drew near, and now the nephew appeared in even greater glory. Any company that lacked his presence was found boring, and people yawned when a man of sense said something; but when the nephew uttered the silliest nonsense in bad German, everyone was all ears. It now transpired that the excellent young man was also a poet: for hardly an evening went by on which he did not pull some paper from his pocket and read out several sonnets to the company. Now, there were some people

who maintained that one part of these poems were poor and without meaning, and they would have it that they had seen another part in print somewhere; but the nephew was not to be put out, he read and read, then called attention to the charms of his verses, and vigorous applause invariably ensued.

It was, however, the Grünwiesel balls that were his triumph. Nobody could dance as continuously, as quickly as he; nobody made such bold and uncommonly graceful leaps as he. Moreover, his uncle always dressed him splendidly in the latest fashion, and although the clothes would not sit right upon his body, people still found that everything suited him most delightfully. Now, the men did feel somewhat insulted by the new style he established. Formerly, the mayor had always opened the ball in person, and the most respectable young people had the right to order the rest of the dances; but since the strange young gentleman had appeared, all of this had totally changed. Without further ado, he took the first lady he came to by the hand, positioned himself at the head with her, did precisely as he pleased, and was Lord and Master and King of the Ball. But because the ladies found these manners quite splendid and agreeable, the men could not venture any objections, and the nephew was able to maintain his self-appointed eminence.

Such balls as these seemed to afford the old gentleman the greatest pleasure; he did not take his eyes off his nephew, constantly smiled to himself, and when all the world came flocking up to him to bestow praises on the respectable, well-bred youth, he was quite beside himself with joy, and, bursting out into lusty laughter, appeared quite the

idiot. The people of Grünwiesel ascribed these singular outbursts of exhilaration to the great love he bore his nephew and found them to be perfectly natural. But now and then he was obliged to bring his paternal authority to bear on his nephew. For in the middle of the most elegant dances, the young man could suddenly take it into his head to land on the platform, where the town-musicians were sitting, with a bold leap, wrench the double-bass from the organist's hand and scrape around on it horribly; or he changed to dancing on his hands all of a sudden, sticking his legs up in the air. Then the uncle would take him to one side, where he gravely reproached him, and pulled his cravat tighter to make him well-mannered again. In this way did the nephew conduct himself in society and at balls. But as it tends to be the case with manners that bad ones always spread more easily than good ones, and a new, striking fashion, even if it be highly ridiculous, has something contagious about it for young people who have not yet reflected in depth on themselves and the world – so was it in Grünwiesel with the nephew and his singular manners. And so, when the young generation saw how he was rather esteemed than censured, with his awkward demeanour, his coarse laughter and prattle, and his rude answers to his elders, and that all of this was found to be most ingenious, then they thought to themselves: "It's an easy matter for me to become such an ingenious rogue too." They had always been diligent, able young people; now they thought, "What's the use of learning when you prosper more with ignorance?" And they let their books gather dust and loitered around in every square and street. They had always been civil and polite to everyone, had waited until they were spoken to and then replied decently

and humbly; now, they thrust themselves into the ranks of men, chatted freely, ventured their opinions, and even laughed in the mayor's face whenever he spoke, asserting that they knew everything much better than he.

The youth of Grünwiesel had always abhorred rude and low behaviour. Now, they sang all kinds of base songs, smoked tobacco in monstrous pipes, and hung around in common taverns; they also, although they could see perfectly well, bought themselves big spectacles, put these over their noses, and thought themselves accomplished persons – for did they not look like the famous nephew? When at home, or on a visit, they would lie with their boots and spurs on the sofa, rock on their chair when in good company, or rest their cheeks in both hands, their elbows on the table, which was exceedingly charming to behold. In vain did their mothers and friends tell them how foolish, how unseemly all this behaviour was; they brought up the shining example of the nephew. In vain was it represented to them that one must excuse a certain national uncouthness in the nephew, he being a young Englishman, for the youth of Grünwiesel maintained that they were every bit as entitled as the best Englishman to be ill-mannered in an ingenious way. In short, it was lamentable to see how polite manners and good habits in Grünwiesel were utterly destroyed by the bad example of the nephew.

But the pleasure the young people took in their rude, unrestrained life was not of long duration; for the following occurrence changed the whole scene at once. The winter entertainments were to conclude with a major concert, to be performed partly by the town-musicians, partly by

skilled amateur musicians of Grünwiesel. The mayor played the violoncello, the doctor the bassoon, quite splendidly; the apothecary, although he did not really have the lip for it, blew the flute; several young ladies of Grünwiesel had rehearsed arias; and everything had been capitally prepared. Then the old stranger declared that the concert would certainly be excellent as it was, but it was clearly wanting a duet, and a duet must necessarily occur in every proper concert. This remark caused some embarrassment; although the mayor's daughter sang like a nightingale, where to find a gentleman who could sing a duet with her? In the end, they were about to pitch upon the old organist, who had sung a splendid bass at one time; but the stranger maintained that there was no need for this, as his nephew sang excellently. They were all not a little astonished at this new, splendid accomplishment of the young man; he had to sing something as a trial, and aside from some singular mannerisms, which were taken to be English, he sang like an angel. The duet was hastily rehearsed, and at last the evening arrived on which the ears of the people of Grünwiesel were to be regaled with the concert.

The old stranger could not, alas, be present at his nephew's triumph, for he was ill; but he enjoined upon the mayor, who visited him an hour before the concert began, several directions to control his nephew. "He is a good soul, my nephew," he said, "but every so often he falls into all kinds of singular fancies and then launches into crazy capers; it is on that very account that I regret being unable to attend the concert; for he is mightily careful in front of me, and he knows why! I must say to his honour, by the way, that this is no mental wantonness, but it is physical, it lies in his

nature. If you would, Mr. Mayor, should he fall into such fancies as perhaps to sit down on a music-stand or to insist upon playing the double bass or the like, if you would loosen his high cravat somewhat, or, if even this does not help, pull it off him entirely, you will see how complaisant and well-behaved he will become." The mayor thanked the sick man for this confidence and promised, should the need arise, to do as he had been advised.

The concert-hall was jam-packed; for all of Grünwiesel and its environs had come. All the hunters, clergymen, officials, farmers and the like within a radius of three leagues, had flocked there, with their large families, to share this rare treat with the people of Grünwiesel. The town-musicians gave a splendid account of themselves; after them came the mayor, who played the violoncello, accompanied by the apothecary, who played the flute; after these, the organist sang a bass aria to universal applause, and the doctor was also given a big hand for his performance on the bassoon.

The first part of the concert was over, and everyone was now on tenterhooks for the second, in which the young stranger was to sing a duet with the mayor's daughter. The nephew had appeared in brilliant attire and long since drawn the attention of all those present to himself. For he had, without so much as a by-your-leave, plumped himself down in the luxurious armchair which had been placed there for a neighbouring Countess; he stretched his legs far out, looked at everyone through an immense opera-glass, which he used in addition to his great spectacles, and played with a large mastiff, which he had introduced into the company

in spite of the prohibition on bringing in dogs. The Countess, for whom the armchair had been prepared, appeared; but the nephew was the last person to think of rising and vacating the seat for her; on the contrary, he nestled in all the more snugly, and nobody dared to say a word about this to the young man. As for the noble lady, she had to sit in a quite common straw-bottomed chair amidst the other women of the town and was, apparently, not a little vexed.

During the mayor's superb performance, during the organist's excellent bass aria, indeed, even during the doctor's fantasia on the bassoon, when everyone was listening with breathless attention, the nephew had the dog fetch his handkerchief, or chattered very loudly with his neighbours, leading everyone who did not know him to wonder at the peculiar manners of the young gentleman.

So it was no surprise that everyone was very eager to hear how he would perform his duet. The second part began; the town-musicians had played a short piece, and now the mayor, with his daughter, walked up to the young man, handed him a sheet of music, and said: "Monshure, would you be so kind as to sing the Duetto?" The young man laughed, bared his teeth, and leapt to his feet, and the other two followed him to the music-stand. The whole company was agog with expectation. The organist beat time and signalled to the nephew to begin. The latter looked at the music-sheet through his large spectacles and gave out horrible, lamentable howls. The organist cried out to him, "Two notes lower, my dear fellow, you must sing C, C!"

But instead of singing C, the nephew pulled off one of his shoes and

threw it at the organist's head, scattering powder out far and wide. When the mayor saw this, he thought: "Ha, now he's having one of his fits!" And running over, he seized him by the throat and loosened his cravat a little; but this simply made things worse with the young man. He spoke German no longer, but a completely strange language which nobody understood, and made remarkable leaps. The mayor was in despair at this disagreeable interruption; he therefore took the resolve to undo the young man's cravat altogether, thinking something quite out-of-the-ordinary must have befallen him. But scarcely had he done this than he stood transfixed with horror; for instead of a human skin and complexion, a dark-brown fur covered the young person's neck, and he immediately recommenced leaping, but higher and more strangely than ever, plunged his kid gloves into his hair, pulled it off, and – O Wonder, that beautiful hair was a wig, which he threw in the mayor's face, and his head now appeared to be covered with the same brown fur.

He leapt over tables and benches, overturned the music-stands, stamped on violins and clarinets, and appeared to have gone completely doolally. "Catch him, catch him!" cried the mayor, quite beside himself, "he's out of his mind, catch him!" But that was a difficult matter; for he had taken off his gloves, revealing nails on his hands which he thrust into everyone's faces, scratching them pitiably. At last, a courageous hunter succeeded in securing him, pressing his long arms against his sides so that all he could do was wriggle his feet and laugh hoarsely and shriek. People gathered around him and looked at the strange young gentleman, who no longer appeared human in the least. Then a learned gentleman of

the neighbourhood, who possessed a large natural history cabinet and all kinds of stuffed animals, stepped forward, examined him closely, and cried out in amazement: "My God, ladies and gentlemen, how could you bring this beast into polite society, it is an *ape*, the *Homo Troglodytes Linnaei*, I'll give you six dollars for him right now if you let me have him, and I'll stuff him for my cabinet."

Who could describe the astonishment of the people of Grünwiesel when they heard this? "What, an ape, an orang-utan, in our society? The young stranger is nothing but a common ape?" they cried, and looked at one another quite stupefied with amazement. They would not credit it, they would not trust their ears; the men examined the beast more closely, but it was, and it remained, a real, natural ape.

"But how is this possible?" cried the mayor's wife. "Did he not often read his poems out to me? Did he not dine at my table like any other man?"

"What?" the doctor's wife fulminated. "What? Did he not, many a time and oft, drink coffee in my house and talk learnedly and smoke with my husband?"

"What! Is it possible?" cried the men. "Did he not bowl at ninepins with us in the rock-cellar and dispute on politics just like any one of us?" "How can it be?" they all lamented. "Did he not even lead the dance at our balls? An ape! An ape? It's a prodigy, it's sorcery!" said the citizens. "Yes, it is sorcery and a diabolical prank," said the mayor, producing the cravat of the nephew, or the ape. "Look! All the magic which rendered him so amiable in our eyes was in this cravat. There is a broad strip of elastic

parchment, inscribed with all kinds of curious characters. I do believe it is Latin; can no-one read it?"

The Rector, a learned man, who had lost many a game of chess to the ape, stepped forward, examined the parchment, and said: "Not at all! These are only Latin letters – they say:

The ape is really quite a hoot,

Above all, when he's chomping fruit.

"Yes, yes, it a hellish deception, a species of sorcery," he continued, "and it must meet with exemplary punishment."

The mayor was of the same opinion and set off at once for the house of the stranger, who had to be a sorcerer, and six of the town-militia carried the ape; for the stranger was to stand cross-examination forthwith.

They arrived, surrounded by a great multitude of people, at the deserted house; for everyone wished to see what turn the affair would take. They knocked at the door, they rang the bell, but in vain; nobody appeared. Then the mayor, in his fury, had the door battered down and entered the stranger's rooms. But nothing was to be seen there, other than all sorts of furniture. The stranger was nowhere to be found. There was, however, a large, sealed letter lying on his writing desk, addressed to the mayor, who opened it without delay. He read:

"My dear people of Grünwiesel!

By the time you read this, I shall no longer be in your little town, and you will have learned long since the rank and nation to which my dear nephew belongs. Take the joke, which I allowed myself the liberty of with you, as a salutary lesson not to force into your society a stranger who

wishes to live apart. I felt myself to be too good to share in your eternal gossiping, your miserable customs and your ludicrous conduct. For that reason, I reared a young orang-utan, whom you took so to heart as my representative. Fare well and make use of this lesson to the most of your might!" The people of Grünwiesel were not a little ashamed before the whole land. Their consolation was that all of this had come about through unnatural means. It was the young people in Grünwiesel who were the most mortified, for they had imitated the bad habits and manners of the ape. From that time on, they did not plant their elbows down, they no longer rocked their chair, they kept silent until they were spoken to, they took off their glasses and were as polite and well-mannered as before; and if one of them ever relapsed into such bad, ridiculous manners, the people of Grünwiesel would say: "It's an ape." Now the ape which had, for so long, played the role of a young gentleman, was handed over to the learned man who possessed a natural history cabinet. The latter gives him the run of his yard, feeds him, and shows him to every stranger as a rare specimen; and he may be seen there even to the present day.