

LITTLE ZACHES, GREAT ZINNOBER

A FAIRY TALE

A Translation of E.T.A. Hoffmann's

KLEIN ZACHES, GENANNT ZINNOBER

Ein Märchen

By

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Chapter One

The little changeling – A Priest’s nose in pressing danger – How Fürst¹ Paphnutius established Enlightenment in his realm and the Fairy Rosabelverde entered a convent.

Close to the road, not far from a pleasant village, a poor, ragged peasant woman lay stretched out on the hot earth beneath a blazing sun. Tormented by hunger, panting with thirst, and languishing to the point of death, the unfortunate woman had sunk down beneath the weight of a basket piled high with twigs laboriously picked up from beneath the trees and shrubs of the forest; and because she was scarcely capable of breath, she believed that she was certainly about to die, but her hopeless misery would thus end all at once. Yet she soon summoned sufficient strength to unfasten, with fumbling fingers, the cords fastening the basket of wood to her back and to slowly push herself up onto a grassy spot lying close by. Then she broke out into a loud lament:

“And must,” she wailed, “and must all the poverty and misery come to me and my poor husband? And aren’t we the only ones in the whole village who, despite all our work, despite all our hard-spilt sweat, stay constantly poor and barely earn enough to satisfy our hunger?

“Three years ago, when my husband found those pieces of gold, while digging our garden over – yes, then we believed that happiness had finally called on us and good days were coming. But what happened?

“Thieves stole the money, our house and barn burnt away over our heads, the grain in our fields was crushed by hail, and then, to fill our cup of misery to the point of overflowing, Heaven punished us further with this little changeling, who I bore to the shame and the mockery of the whole village.

“On St Laurence’s Day² the boy was three-and-a-half and he can’t walk, he can’t run on his spidery little legs, and instead of talking, he growls and miaows, like a cat. Yet for all that the deformed wretch eats like the strongest eight-year-old lad, without putting on any weight at all. May God have mercy on him and on us, if we have to raise the boy at our expense and to our greater suffering – for little hop-o’-my-thumb will certainly eat and drink more and more, but never work as long as he lives! No, no, that’s more than a woman can bear on this earth! Oh, why can’t I just die – just die!”

And the poor woman began to weep and to sob, and at last, overwhelmed by pain, and totally exhausted, she fell asleep.

The woman had every right to complain about the repulsive changeling whom she had given birth to three-and-a-half years previously. What one at first sight could well have regarded as a small, strangely cartilaginous wooden stick was actually a malformed boy, barely two spans high, who had crawled down from the basket, in which he had been lying crosswise, and was now growling and rolling in the grass. The thing’s head was set deep between its shoulders, it had a pumpkin-like outgrowth in place of a back, and its hazel switch-thin little legs hung down directly beneath its breast, so that the boy resembled a split radish. A dull eye would discover little about the face, but looking more closely, you would become aware of a long, sharp nose jutting out beneath shaggy black hair and a pair of small, darkly flashing eyes that seemed – especially when one considered the otherwise quite old, furrowed facial features – to reveal a small alraun.³

Now when, as has been said, the woman’s grief had sunk her into a deep sleep and her little son had rolled up close to her, it happened that the Fräulein von Rosenschön, Lady of the nearby convent, wandered along this way while returning home from a walk. She stopped and, being by nature

pious and sympathetic, was greatly moved by the miserable scene that met her eyes.

“Oh, merciful Heaven,” she began, “but there is so much wretchedness and distress on Earth! The poor, unhappy woman! I know that she is clinging onto dear life, she has been working her body to a stop and has collapsed from hunger and sorrow! Now, for the first time, I really feel how poor and powerless I am! Oh, if I could only help as I want to! Yet that which I have left – the few gifts a hostile fate was not able to rob me of, or destroy, that are still at my command – I shall employ powerfully and faithfully to put a stop to this chagrin. Money – assuming I could offer it – would not help you at all, poor woman, but perhaps even make your condition worse. You and your husband, the two of you are simply not blessed with money, and whoever is not blessed with money finds that pieces of gold disappear from his pocket, without knowing exactly how; he gains nothing but deep frustration and, the more money that pours his way, the poorer and poorer he becomes. But I know that what gnaws at your heart more than all the poverty, more than all the distress, is your having given birth to that little monster who hangs on you like an evil, sinister burden you must carry throughout life. Tall – handsome – strong – intelligent – all these things, the boy simply cannot become; but he can perhaps be helped in another way.”

And the Fräulein sat down on the grass, taking the little one on her lap. The wicked alraun struggled and kicked out and, growling, tried to bite the Fräulein’s finger; but she merely said, “Easy now, easy, little cockchafer!” and stroked his head with the palm of her hand, lightly and gently, up from the brow and over and down to his neck. Gradually, the little one’s shaggy hair smoothed out beneath these strokes, until it flowed down in soft and handsome curls, brushing the face, onto his high shoulders and his pumpkin-

back. The little one had become calmer and calmer, then finally fallen into a deep sleep. So Fräulein Rosenschön laid him carefully down in the grass beside his mother, sprinkled her with some holy water from a smelling bottle she had taken out of her pocket, and walked away with rapid steps.

And the woman, soon waking, felt miraculously strengthened and refreshed. It seemed to her that she had eaten a hearty meal and drunk a good drop of wine.

“Hey!” she cried, “how much comfort, how much cheer has come to me in that short sleep! – But the sun will soon be sinking behind the mountains, so away! Homewards!”

With these words she shaped to hoist up the basket when, looking inside, she missed the little one, who at that very moment sat up in the grass and gave a whining squawk. Now when the mother looked round at him, she clapped her hands in amazement and cried: “Zaches – Little Zaches, and who has been combing your hair so beautifully? Zaches – Little Zaches, how prettily those curls would suit you, if you weren’t such a horribly nasty boy! Now, come on – come! – Into the basket!”

She reached for him, intending to lay him crosswise over the wood, but Little Zaches thrashed about with his legs, grinned at his mother, and miaowed quite audibly: “I don’t want to!”

“Zaches – Little Zaches!” the woman shrieked, quite beside herself: “and who has been teaching you to talk? Now then! If you have such beautifully combed hair, if you can talk so civilly, why then you’ll be able to run as well.” The woman loaded the basket on her back, Little Zaches hung from her apron, and in this manner they reached the village.

Their way took them past the priest’s house, where it so happened that the priest was standing at the front door with his youngest son, a beautiful three-year-old boy with golden curls. Now when the priest saw the woman

approaching with her heavy basket of wood and with little Zaches dangling from her apron, he cried to her: “Good evening, Frau Liese, how are you? You have burdened yourself with *far* too heavy a load; you can *hardly* take another step, come here, rest a little on this bench before my door, my maid will bring you something fresh to drink!”

Frau Liese did not need to be told twice, but set down her basket; and she was just opening her mouth to complain about all her misery and distress to the venerable gentleman when little Zaches, losing his balance at his mother’s sudden turn, flew off and landed at the priest’s feet. He quickly bent down and lifted the little one up, saying:

“Why, Frau Liese, Frau Liese, what a beautiful, delightful boy you have here! The possession of such a wonderfully beautiful child is a true blessing from Heaven.”

With these words, he took the little one in his arms and caressed him and did not at all seem to notice that the naughty hop-o’-my-thumb was growling and mewling quite nastily and even trying to bite the venerable gentleman’s nose. But Frau Liese stood, totally perplexed, before the priest, and looked at him with wide-open, glassy eyes, not at all knowing what she should think.

“Oh, dear Father,” she finally began in a whining voice, “a man of God, like you, surely doesn’t make fun of a poor, unhappy woman, who Heaven – it alone may know why – has punished with this repulsive changeling!”

“What mad nonsense,” the priest replied in a serious tone, “what mad nonsense you’re talking, dear lady! About making fun – changeling – divine punishment – I don’t understand you at all, and all I know is that you must be quite blind if you don’t love your handsome son with all your heart. Kiss me, my clever little man!”

The priest hugged the little one, but Zaches growled: "I don't want to!" and snapped anew at the priestly nose. "Just look at the wicked beast!" cried the startled Liese; but at that moment the priest's son spoke: "Oh, dear father, you're so good, you're so nice with children, I think they all must love you with all their hearts!"

"Oh, just listen," cried the priest, his eyes beaming with joy, "oh, just listen, Frau Liese, to the handsome, intelligent boy, your dear Zaches, whom you're so ill-disposed towards. I can see right now that you'll never be very keen on the boy, no matter how handsome or intelligent he may be. Listen, Frau Liese: leave your promising child to be cared for and brought up by me. With your pressing poverty, the boy is only a burden to you, and it will be a joy to me to bring him up like my own son!"

Liese was far too amazed to collect her thoughts; again and again she cried, "But dear Father, dear Father, are you really serious about wanting to take the misshapen little creature into your care and bring him up and free me from the troubles the changeling gives me?"

Yet the more the woman represented her little alraun's loathsome ugliness to the priest, the more eagerly he claimed that she, in her blind madness, did in no way deserve to be blessed by Heaven with the splendid present of such a wonderboy; and in the end he furiously ran into his house, with Little Zaches on his arm, and closed and bolted the door.

Now Frau Liese stood as still as a statue before the priest's front door and had absolutely no idea what she should make of all this.

"What in the whole, wide world has happened to our worthy Father, that he should be so completely crazy about my Little Zaches and takes the simple squirt for a handsome, intelligent boy? Well! May God help the dear man, he has taken the weight off my shoulders and loaded it onto his own – may he now have a care how he carries it! Hey! How light the basket of

wood has become, now Little Zaches is no longer sitting on it, and weighing it down with worry!"

And with that Frau Liese, the basket of wood on her back, stepped joyfully and in good spirits on her way! - - -

Even if I wished to remain completely silent at this time, you would nevertheless presumably suspect, gentle reader, that there must be quite an exceptional explanation behind Sister von Rosenschön – or Rosengrünschön, as she sometimes called herself. For the good-natured priest regarding Little Zaches as a beautiful and clever child and immediately receiving him as his own was certainly nothing other than the mysterious effect of her head-stroking and hair-smoothing. However, despite your excellent perspicacity, you could, dear reader, fall into false presumptions, or even turn over many pages – at a great disadvantage to the story – for the sole reason of immediately discovering more about the mystical nun; therefore it is probably better that I tell you everything I myself know about the worthy lady right now.

Fräulein von Rosenschön had a large build, a noble, majestic stature, and a rather proud, imperious bearing. Her face, which one had at first sight to consider exquisitely beautiful, nonetheless made a strange, almost uncanny impression – especially when, as was her wont, she stared before her with a fixed seriousness – which could primarily be ascribed to a distinctive, strange feature between her eyebrows that left one rather uncertain whether a nun could really have such a feature on her brow. For all that, there was often so much grace and beauty in her expression, especially in clear, lovely weather when roses were blooming, that everyone felt entranced by a sweet and irresistible magic. When I had the pleasure of seeing the gracious lady for the first and last time, she was by all

appearances a lady in the fullest flower, on the highest peak of the incline; and I considered myself the recipient of great good fortune to be able to see the lady on this very peak, and to be slightly frightened by her wonderful beauty, which would very soon no longer be possible.

I was mistaken. The oldest villagers assured me that they had already known the young lady as long as they had thought, and that she had never looked any different; no older, no younger, no uglier, no prettier than at this precise moment. Time therefore seemed to have no power over her, and this alone could strike many as strange. But much else ensued, at which anyone who seriously considered the matter would be just as surprised; indeed, he would entangle himself further and further in amazement until he was no longer able to free himself. The first thing to quite clearly reveal itself about the lady was her relationship with the flowers whose name she bore. For not only was no one on Earth able to grow such splendid, thousand-leaved roses as she, but even the driest, most miserable thorn that she planted in the earth would shoot up into one of these flowers at the height of its fullness and splendour. And then it was known that, walking alone in the forest, she conducted audible conversations with miraculous voices, which seemed to sound forth from the trees, from the bushes, from the springs and streams. Yes, a young huntsman had once eavesdropped on her when she was standing in the middle of the densest undergrowth, and strange birds with colourful, shining plumage, certainly not native to the land, were flapping around and caressing her, seeming to tell her all kinds of merry news with their cheerful singing and twittering, at which she laughed with delight.

This was the reason why Fräulein von Rosenschön, at the time she entered the convent, soon attracted the attention of everyone in the district. Her admission to the convent had been ordered by the Fürst, and the Baron Prätextatus von Mondschein, owner of the estate in which this convent was

situated – and so its administrator – could therefore raise no objections, despite being tormented by the most appalling doubts. For all his efforts to discover the Rosengrünschön family in ‘Rixners Turnierbuch’⁴ and other chronicles had been in vain. This caused him to doubt, with some justification, the convertability of the young lady, who was unable to show a pedigree of thirty-two forefathers; and in the end, totally overcome with remorse, the tears glistening in his eyes, he asked her for Heaven’s sake to at least call herself Rosenschön, not Rosengrünschön, because the former name had *some* sense to it and possibly an ancestor.

Which she did to please him.

Perhaps the offended Prätextatus’ grudge against the peerless lady showed itself in this or that way and gave the initial impetus to the aspersions that soon began to ripple round the village. On top of those magical conversations in the forest – which, however, had no further significance – there appeared all sorts of dubious details, travelling from mouth to mouth and portraying the Fräulein’s character in an extremely ambiguous light. Mother Anne, the mayor’s wife, boldly claimed that when the lady sneezed loudly out of the window, all the milk in the village immediately turned sour. But this had barely been confirmed when disaster struck. The Schoolmaster’s young Mike had been nibbling at some roast potatoes in the convent kitchen and was caught in the act by the lady, who smiled and wagged a threatening finger at him. Then the boy’s mouth would not shut, exactly as if a burning roast potato were lodged inside forever, and from that time on he had to wear a hat with a broad, protruding brim, because otherwise it would have rained into the poor boy’s mouth.

It soon seemed to be certain that the lady knew how to conjure up fire and water, drive together storm-clouds and hail-clouds, weave Wichtelzöpfe⁵ etc., and no one doubted the shepherd’s testimony when he

claimed to have seen, at the midnight hour, to his shuddering dread, the lady racing through the air on a broomstick behind a monstrous stag-beetle with blue flames flaring up and leaping between its horns!

Now all was in uproar; everyone wanted to lay hands on the witch, and the village court resolved on nothing less than fetching the Fräulein from the convent and throwing her in the water, so she could take the customary witches' ordeal. Baron Prätextatus allowed all this to happen, saying to himself with a smile: "That's the way of simple-minded people who have no ancestors and cannot claim such a good old descent as that of Mondschein."

The lady, informed of the threatening disaster, flew to the Fürst's Palace; and soon afterwards Baron Prätextatus received a cabinet-order from the Fürst of the Land, through means of which it was made known to him that there were no witches, and he was ordered to reward the village court for their presumptuous eagerness to see the natatory talents of a nun by throwing them into the dungeon, and to let it be intimated to the other peasants and their wives that thinking ill of the Fräulein von Rosenschön was a mistake they would be made to feel. They thought things over, trembled at the threatened punishment and, from that point on, thought well of the Fräulein – which had, for both the village and the Lady Rosenschön, the most beneficial consequences.

It was well known in the Fürst's Cabinet that Fräulein von Rosenschön was none other than the elsewhere world-famous Fairy Rosabelverde. The facts of the matter were as follows:

Over the whole, wide Earth, there could hardly be found a more pleasant spot than the small principality in which Baron Prätextatus von Mondschein's estate lay, in which Fräulein von Rosenschön lived – in short,

in which everything took place that I, my dear reader, am just about to narrate to you in greater detail.

Enclosed by lofty mountains, the little land resembled, with its green, fragrant forests, with its flowery meadows, with its murmuring streams and merrily splashing fountains – and especially with its having not one single town, but only smiling villages and isolated palaces dotted here and there – a wonderfully gorgeous garden, in which the inhabitants wandered at their leisure, free from all of life's pressing burdens. Everyone knew that Fürst Demetrius governed the land; however, no one noticed the slightest sign of government, and everyone was very well satisfied with this. Persons who loved to have freedom in all their actions, a beautiful region and a mild climate, could not choose a better place of residence than this principality; and it therefore happened that among others who settled here were various splendid fairies of the good persuasion, who are known to value warmth and freedom above everything else. They may have been responsible for the most delightful marvels that very often took place in almost every village, but mainly in the forests, and for everyone being so immersed in the delight, the bliss of these marvels, that they fully believed in the miraculous and, without being conscious of the fact, remained for that very reason happy and therefore good citizens. The good fairies, who passed their time with a free, jinn-like capriciousness, would gladly have granted the excellent Demetrius eternal life. This did not however lie in their power. Demetrius died, to be succeeded by young Paphnutius.

Even in his father's lifetime, Paphnutius had nursed the silent, hidden grief that, in his opinion, the people and the State were being ignored and neglected in the most deplorable manner. He decided to govern and immediately appointed his valet Andres, who had once, in an inn on the far

side of the mountains, lent him six Ducats when he had left his purse behind, and so rescued him from grave danger, as First Minister of the Realm.

“I want to rule, my friend!” Paphnutius cried to him. Andres could read in his lord’s looks what was going through his mind, and threw himself down at his feet, saying with some solemnity:

“Sire! The historic hour has struck! – Through you, a realm rises gleaming from nocturnal Chaos! – Sire! Right here the most loyal vassal is pleading, a thousand voices of the poor, unhappy people in his breast and throat! – Sire! – Let there be Enlightenment!”

Paphnutius felt shaken to the core by the sublime thoughts of his minister. Raising him to his feet, he pressed him violently against his breast and said sobbing: “Minister – Andres – I owe you six Ducats – even more – my fortune – my realm! – Oh my loyal, clever servant!”

Paphnutius wanted an edict printed in large letters at once and posted on all corners, to the effect that henceforth Enlightenment had been established and everyone should heed this fact. However:

“Dear Sire!” cried Andres, “my dear Sire! That’s not how you do it!”

“So how do you do it, my dear fellow?” asked Paphnutius, taking his minister by the buttonhole, drawing him into his cabinet, and locking the doors.

“You see,” began Andres, once he had sat down on a small taboret opposite his Fürst, “you see, my noble lord! – The effect of your princely edict concerning Enlightenment would perhaps be affected in an unpleasant way, if we do not combine it with a measure that certainly appears severe, but which common-sense actually demands.

“Before we progress with Enlightenment i.e. before we hack down the forests, make the rivers navigable, grow potatoes, improve the village schools, plant acacias and poplars, teach the youth to sing the morning and

evening hymns in duet, lay high roads and inoculate against cowpox, it is necessary that all those of dangerous dispositions, who lend no ear to reason and lead the people astray by sheer inanities, be expelled from the state.

“You have read ‘A Thousand and One Nights’, dear Fürst, for I know that your serenely blessed Herr Papa – may Heaven grant him a restful slumber in the grave – loved unfortunate books of that kind, and handed them to you, when you were yet riding your hobby-horse and consuming gilded gingerbread. And so!

“From these completely muddled books, you will, my noble Lord, probably know the so-called fairies, but certainly not suspect that several of these dangerous persons have settled in your own beloved land, right in the vicinity of your palace, and are getting up to all sorts of mischief.”

“What? – What is he saying – Andres! Minister! Fairies – here in my land?”

Thus cried the Fürst, going deathly pale and sinking into the back of his chair.

“Calm, my noble lord,” continued Andres, “we can remain calm, as long as we use our brains in our crusade against those enemies of Enlightenment. Yes! – I name them enemies of Enlightenment, because by abusing the goodness of your blessed Herr Papa, they and they alone are responsible for our dear State still being laid low in total darkness. They are carrying on a dangerous trade with the miraculous and they do not shy away from spreading, under the name of poetry, a secret poison that makes people quite incapable of serving the Enlightenment. And then they have such unbearable, police-unfriendly habits, that for these alone they may not be tolerated in any civilised state. For example: the impudent creatures have the effrontery to go, as soon as the fancy takes them, for a drive in the air with harnessed doves, swans – indeed, even winged horses. Now I ask you,

my noble lord: is it worth the effort of drawing up and introducing a sensible customs tariff, when there are people in the State capable of throwing untaxed goods down every thoughtless citizen's chimney, as and when they desire?

“For that, my noble lord – as soon as Enlightenment is proclaimed, out with the fairies! Their palaces will be surrounded by the Police, their dangerous possessions will be confiscated, and they will be sent packing as vagabonds to their fatherland which, as you will know from the ‘Thousand and One Nights’, my noble lord, is the little land of Jinnistan.”

“Do post-wagons go to this land, Andres?” was the Fürst’s question.

“Not at this present time,” replied Andres, “but a relay there could perhaps, once Enlightenment has been established, be profitably started.”

“But Andres,” continued the Fürst, “will our treatment of the fairies not be considered harsh? – Will the spoilt populace not grumble?”

“For that as well,” said Andres, “for that as well, I know a way. We will not, my noble lord, send all the fairies away to Jinnistan; we will keep some in the land, but not only rob them of all means of being injurious to Enlightenment, but also employ the appropriate measures to transform them into useful members of the Enlightened State. If they are unwilling to agree to such respectable marriages, then they may, under close supervision, ply some useful trade, knitting socks for the army in time of war, or whatever. Mark my words, my noble lord, the people will very soon cease to believe in fairies once they begin to walk among them, and that is for the best. So all conceivable grumbling will cease of its own accord.

“Incidentally, as concerns the fairies’ utensils, then they will find a home in the Princely Treasury, the doves and swans will be delivered to the Princely Kitchen to make delicious roasts; but one could attempt to cultivate the winged horses and make useful beasts out of them, by cutting off their

wings and giving them these as stable-fodder, which we will hopefully establish at the same time as Enlightenment.”

Paphnutius was greatly satisfied with all of his minister’s suggestions, and on the following day all that had been resolved was carried out. On all corners the edict emblazoned the newly established Enlightenment, and at the same time the Police burst into the fairies’ palaces, confiscated their entire property, took them prisoner and led them away.

Heaven alone may know how it happened that the Fairy Rosabelverde was the only one to get wind, a few hours beforehand, of the approaching surge of Enlightenment; and she used the time to set her swans free and get rid of her magic rose-bushes and other precious objects. Moreover, she knew that she had been chosen to remain in the land; a resolve with which she complied, albeit with great reluctance.

Actually, neither Paphnutius nor Andres could understand why the fairies transported to Jinnistan expressed such excessive joy and stated again and again that all the possessions they had to leave behind didn’t matter in the least.

“Perhaps,” Paphnutius cried indignantly, “perhaps Jinnistan is a much nicer state than mine, and they are laughing their heads off at me and my edict and my Enlightenment, which makes me *determined* that it will progress!”

The Geographer and the State Historian were to report on the land in minute detail.

Both agreed that Jinnistan was a miserable land, with no culture, Enlightenment, erudition, acacias or cowpox, and actually didn’t exist at all. And there was surely nothing worse that could befall a human being or a country than not existing at all.

Paphnutius felt reassured.

When the beautiful flowery grove, in which Fairy Rosabelverde's deserted palace was situated, was chopped down and Paphnutius himself had, by way of example, inoculated all the country oafs in the next village against cowpox, the fairy waited for the Prince in the forest through which he was to return to his castle with Minister Andres. Then she drove him with all kinds of persuasive words, but primarily with some sinister tricks she had hidden from the police, into such a tight corner that he asked her, for Heaven's sake, to please make do with a place in the only (and so best) convent in the whole land, where she could reign and ordain as she liked, without having to care about the edict of Enlightenment.

The Fairy Rosabelverde accepted the suggestion and in this way entered the convent where she, as has already been related, named herself Fräulein von Rosengrünschön but then, at the pressing request of Baron Prätextatus von Mondschein, Fräulein von Rosenschön.

Chapter Two

Of the unknown race discovered by the scholar Ptolomäus Philadelphus on his travels. – The University of Kerepes. – How a pair of riding boots flew around the student Fabian's head and Professor Mosch Terpin invited the student Balthasar to a tea-party.

Among the intimate letters written by the world-renowned scholar Ptolomaüs Philadelphus to his friend Rufin, when engaged on distant journeys, may be found the following curious passage:

“You know, my dear Rufin, that there is nothing in the world I fear and avoid so much as the burning sunbeams of the day, which consume the powers of my body and relax and exhaust my mind to such a degree that all my thoughts flow together into a confused image and I vainly struggle to

catch any kind of clear image in my soul. Therefore I am accustomed at this hot season to rest during the day and continue my journey by night; and so I found myself on the road last night. My driver had turned off the correct, comfortable way in the thick darkness and had unexpectedly arrived on the high road. Notwithstanding the fact that I was flung here and there around the carriage by the violent jolts, so that my head, riddled with bumps, was not unlike a sack full of walnuts, I did not awake from the deep sleep I had sunk into until a dreadful jerk sent me plunging out of the carriage onto the hard ground. The sun shone brightly in my face, and through the barrier standing directly before me I perceived the high towers of a considerable city. The driver was vigorously complaining, for not only the shaft, but also a back-wheel of the carriage had broken against the large stone lying in the middle of the high road, and he did not seem to care about me much, if at all. I restrained my anger, as befits the wise man, and merely cried to the fellow, in a gentle voice, that he was a damned rascal, that he may reflect that Ptolomäus Philadelphus, the most renowned scholar of his age, was sitting on du-, and let a shaft be a shaft and a wheel a wheel. You know, my dear Rufin, the power I exert over the human heart, and it therefore happened that the driver immediately ceased complaining and helped me, with the assistance of the toll collector, before whose small house the accident had occurred, on to my feet. Fortunately I had not suffered any serious damage and was able to slowly walk down the road, the driver laboriously dragging his broken carriage along behind me. Not far from that city gate I had seen in the blue distance, I was met by many people of such wondrous appearance and such strange costume that I had to rub my eyes to find out if I was really awake or if a mad, teasing dream had perhaps transported me to a fabulous, foreign land.

“These people, whom I should rightly have held to be inhabitants of the city out of whose gate I saw them issue, wore long, very wide trousers, cut in the Japanese fashion, of delicious material, velvet, Manchester⁶, fine cloth, or also colourfully interwoven with canvas, plentifully trimmed with tresses or pretty ribbons and laces, in addition small children’s coats, barely covering the abdomen, mostly of a sun-bright colour, only a few being black. Their hair hung down with a natural, uncombed wildness over their shoulders and back, and a strange little cap sat on their heads. Many had fully exposed their neck after the fashion of the Turks and Modern Greeks, whereas others wore a small strip of white canvas on their neck and breast, almost resembling a shirt-collar, as you, dear Rufin, will have seen them on the paintings of our ancestors. Despite the fact that all these people seemed to be very young, their speech was deep and coarse, their every movement stiff, and many a one had a small shadow beneath his nose, as if a little moustache were squatting there. Many had a long pipe, with large, dangling silken tassels, jutting out of the back of their small coats. Others had pulled out these pipes and attached small – larger – and sometimes very large, strangely-formed heads to the bottom, out of which they could skilfully make artificial clouds of smoke rise by blowing into a small, tapering tube at the top. Others carried broad, flashing swords in their hands, as if they were about to march out to meet the enemy; yet others had small leather or tin containers slung over their shoulders or buckled on their backs. You can imagine, dear Rufin, that I, I who seek to enrich my knowledge through the careful observation of every phenomenon that is new to me, stood still and locked my gaze on the strange people. Then they assembled around me, screamed ‘Philistine – Philistine!’ with no little violence, and broke out into a dreadful laugh. – That annoyed me. For, my dear Rufin, can anything be more wounding to a great scholar than being taken by the people to be one

of those who, many thousands of years ago, was slain by means of the jawbone of an ass?⁷

“I pulled myself together with my innate dignity and loudly told the strange crowd around me that I hoped to find myself in a civilised state and that I would turn to the police and the law courts to avenge the injustice I had suffered. Then they all began to growl; even those who had not previously been smoking pulled the apparatus designed for that purpose out of their pockets, and they all blew thick clouds of smoke into my face, which, as I only now noticed, stank unbearably and stunned my senses. Then they pronounced a type of curse on me, the words of which I absolutely cannot repeat to you, dear Rufin, on account of their hideousness. I myself cannot recall it without a deep horror. They finally left me, with loud, mocking laughter, and it seemed to me that the word ‘hunting-whip’⁸ was dying away in the breeze.

“My driver, who had seen and heard everything, wrung his hands and said: ‘Oh, my dear Sir! Now that what’s happened has happened, don’t under any circumstances enter that city! No dog would take bread from your hands, as the saying goes, and constant danger would threaten you, beat-’

I did not let the sturdy fellow finish, but turned my steps as quickly as I possibly could to the next village. I am sitting in a lonely chamber in the only inn in this village and writing all of this to you, my dear Rufin! As far as possible, I shall collect news about the barbaric foreign race that resides in that city. I have already been told much that is highly strange about their customs – their habits – their language etc. and shall faithfully inform you of everything etc. etc.”

You perceive, my dear Reader, that one may be a great scholar – and yet be unacquainted with some of life’s ordinary phenomena; and yet get into the oddest dreams over things known throughout the world. Ptolomäus

Philadelphus had studied and yet did not know a student when he saw one; and he did not even know that he was sitting in Hoch-Jakobsheim village which, as is well known, lies close to the famous University of Kerepes, when he wrote to his friend about an occurrence that had reshaped itself in his mind into the strangest adventure. The good Ptolomäus was startled when he met students wandering at their leisure, blithely and in high spirits, out into the country. What terror would have gripped him, had he arrived in Kerepes an hour earlier and had chance led him before the house of the Professor of Natural History Mosch Terpin! Hundreds of students, streaming out of the house, would have surrounded him, disputing noisily, and this babble, this bustle would have led to even stranger dreams crossing his mind.

Of all the lectures in Kerepes, those by Mosch Terpin were the most frequently attended. He was, as stated, Professor of Natural History; he explained how it rains, thunders and lightnings, why the sun shines by day and the moon at night, how and why the grass grows etc., in such a way that any child could understand. He had compressed all of Nature into a dainty little compendium, so that he could quite comfortably handle her as he pleased, and pull out the answer to any question as from a drawer. His reputation was first founded on his having made the happy discovery, after many physics experiments, that darkness principally stems from a lack of light. This, as well as his ability to convert, with a great deal of skill, these same physics experiments into charming tricks, thus making a thoroughly delightful hocus-pocus, procured him an unbelievable popularity.

Allow me, my benevolent Reader, as you are much better acquainted with students than is the renowned scholar Ptolomäus Philadelphus, as you know nothing of his dreamy timorousness, to lead you to Kerepes, before Professor Mosch Terpin's house, when he has just this moment finished a

lecture. Among the students pouring out there is one who immediately holds your attention. You perceive a well-made youth of twenty-three, twenty-four, from whose darkly shining eyes a marvellous, lively inner spirit speaks with eloquent words. His gaze could almost be called saucy, if the infatuated grief spread over his pale countenance had not covered the burning rays like a veil. His coat of fine black cloth, trimmed with velvet, is almost cut in the Old German fashion, and is admirably complemented by the dainty, dazzling-white lace-collar, and the velvet cap that sits on the beautiful chestnut-brown curls. This costume suits him very nicely because he, in his whole being, in his propriety of gait and bearing, in the meaningful formation of his face, really seemed to belong to an earlier, beautiful, pious age; and one would therefore not think of the mere ornamentation, which is often the order of the day with the petty imitation of misunderstood models according to the equally misunderstood requirements of the present.

This young man, whom you, dear reader, find so pleasing at first sight, is none other than the student Balthasar, child of respectable, wealthy people, gentle – sensible – hard-working – about whom I have a great deal to tell you, oh my reader, in the curious story I have undertaken to set down. –

Serious, engrossed in thought, as he was wont to be, Balthasar walked out of Mosch Terpin's lecture towards the gate, heading not for the fencing-ground, but for a pleasant little forest lying hardly a few hundred paces from Kerepes. His friend Fabian, a handsome lad of a cheerful appearance and just such a character, ran after and caught up with him just before the gate.

“Balthasar!” shouted Fabian, “now, Balthasar, are you going out into the forest again, to wander around on your own like a melancholic Philistine, while stalwart lads bravely practise the noble art of fencing? – I’m begging you, Balthasar, will you *please* drop this foolish, sinister behaviour and be really cheerful and happy again, as you always used to be? Come on! –

We'll try a few bouts, and if you still want to go out after that, I'll run along with you."

"You mean well," replied Balthasar, "you mean well, Fabian, and for that reason I don't feel any resentment towards you for occasionally running after me up hill and down dale like a madman, thus depriving me of much pleasure of a kind that you cannot conceive. You're simply one of those strange people who take everyone, whom they see walking alone, for a melancholic fool, and who want to handle and cure him *their* way, like that fawning courtier with the worthy Prince Hamlet, who then, when the little man assured him that he knew nothing of the flute, gave him a proper lesson. Now I shall certainly spare you *that*, dear Fabian, but I *will* ask you with all my heart to look for another mate for your noble fencing with rapier and broadsword and let me continue on my way in peace."

"No, no," cried Fabian, laughing, "you won't escape me like that, my dear friend! – If you won't come with me to the fencing-ground, then I'll go with you out to the forest. It's the duty of a true friend to brighten your melancholy. So come, dear Balthasar, come, if you won't have it any other way."

With that he grabbed his friend under the arm and strode, leading him, sprightly away. Balthasar clenched his teeth in silent fury and persisted in a dark silence, while Fabian breathlessly related merry anecdotes and more merry anecdotes. These included much that was of a foolish nature, which always tends to happen with merry, breathless relations.

Now when they finally stepped into the cool shadows of the fragrant forest, when the bushes seemed to whisper yearning sighs, when the magical melodies of the murmuring streams and the songs of the wood-fowl resounded far into the distance, waking an answering echo from the

mountains, – then Balthasar suddenly stood still and cried, spreading his arms out wide as if about to clasp them lovingly around the trees and bushes:

“Oh, now I feel well again! – Indescribably well!”

Fabian looked at his friend, somewhat perplexed, like one who cannot make head or tail of another’s speech, who doesn’t have a clue what he should make of it. Then Balthasar grabbed his hand and cried with sheer delight:

“Admit it, brother, now you too feel your heart uplifted, now you too comprehend the blessed secret of sylvan solitude?”

“I don’t entirely understand you, dear brother,” replied Fabian, “but if you mean that a walk here in the forest does you good, then I wholeheartedly share your opinion. Don’t I too like going for a walk, especially in good company, with whom one can hold a rational, instructive conversation? – It is, for example, undoubtedly a real pleasure to go for a walk in the country with our Professor Mosch Terpin. He knows every little plant, every blade of grass, its name and which class it belongs to, and he’s an expert on the wind and the weather.”

“Stop right there,” cried Balthasar, “I beg you, stop right there! – You’re touching on something that would drive me mad, if there weren’t a consolation for it! The way in which the Professor talks about Nature rends my very heart. Or rather, I am seized by a sinister horror, as if I saw the madman who, King and Ruler in his foppish folly, caresses the straw-puppet he is controlling, imagining he has his arms around the royal bride’s neck! His so-called experiments seem to me to be an abominable mockery of the Divine Being, whose breath blows on us in Nature and excites the deepest, holiest presentiments in the innermost depths of our soul. I was often tempted to smash his glasses, his phials, all his junk to pieces, if I hadn’t

thought that the ape doesn't desist from playing with fire until he has burnt his paws.

"You see, Fabian, these feelings frighten me, constrict my heart in Mosch Terpin's lectures, and then I probably appear to you to be more profound and introspective than ever. Then I feel as if the houses were about to come crashing down over my head, an indescribable dread drives me out of the town. But here, here a sweet peace soon fills my soul. Lying on the flowery turf, I look up into the blue breadth of Heaven, and over me, away over the rejoicing forest, the golden clouds pass like glorious dreams from a distant world full of blissful joys!"

"Oh my Fabian, then a miraculous spirit rises from my, *my* breast, and I hear it talking in mysterious words with the bushes, with the trees, with the surging of the forest brook, and I just cannot give a name to the delight that then flows through my whole being as a sweet, melancholy yearning!"

"Well!" cried Fabian, "well, once again it's the old never-ending song of melancholy and bliss and talking trees and forest brooks. All your verses are bursting with these good things, which fall very pleasingly on the ear and can be profitably used, so long as you don't look for anything more behind them.

"But tell me, my most excellent melancholicus, if Mosch Terpin's lectures really do offend and annoy you so terribly, just tell me why on earth you run into every one, why you don't miss a single one, only to sit there, on every occasion, dumb and rigid with your eyes closed, like a dreamer?"

"Don't ask," replied Balthasar, lowering his eyes, "don't ask me about that, my dear friend! – Every morning an unknown force draws me into Mosch Terpin's house. I feel my torment approaching, and yet I cannot resist, a dark fate drives me onwards!"

“Ha, ha,” Fabian burst out laughing, “ha, ha, ha – how excellent – how poetic, how mystical! The unknown force that draws you into Mosch Terpin’s house lies in the dark-blue eyes of the lovely Candida! – We have all known for a long time that you’re head over heels in love with the Professor’s pretty little daughter, and so we make allowances for your fantasising, your foolish behaviour. After all, that’s how it is with those in love. You find yourself in the first stage of lovesickness and must, in your late youth, force yourself to do all those strange pranks that we, I and many others – may Heaven be thanked! – went through at school without a large, attentive audience. But believe me, my dear heart – ”

Fabian had in the meantime again seized his friend Balthasar by the arm and had walked rapidly onwards with him. They were just stepping out of the thicket on to the broad road that led through the middle of the forest, when Fabian noticed a riderless horse in the distance, enveloped in a cloud of dust, and trotting towards them.

“Hey, hey!” he cried, interrupting himself, “hey, hey, there’s a damned nag that has bolted and thrown its rider – we must catch it and then search the forest for the rider.” And he placed himself in the middle of the road.

The horse came nearer and nearer; then it seemed as if a pair of riding boots was swinging up and down in the air on both sides and something black was stirring and whirling on the saddle. Straight in front of Fabian there rang out a long, shrill Prrr-Prrr – and at the same moment a pair of riding boots really did fly around his head, and a strange little black thing shot off and landed between his legs. The large horse stood stock still, its long neck stretched forward, and sniffed its tiny master, who rolled about in the dust and finally, laboriously, raised himself to his feet. The little squirt’s head was set deep between his high shoulders; with the outgrowths on his

chest and back, with his short body and his high, spidery little legs, he resembled an apple skewered on a fork, on which someone had carved a grotesque face. Now when Fabian saw this strange little monster standing before him, he burst out into loud laughter. But the little one defiantly squashed the small cap, that he had snatched up from the ground, down over his eyes and asked in a husky, deeply hoarse tone, looking fiery daggers at Fabian:

“Is this the right way to Kerepes?”

“Yes, sir,” replied Balthasar in a soft, serious voice; and, having collected the boots, he handed them to the little one. All the little one’s efforts to put the boots on were in vain; he toppled over again and again and rolled, groaning, in the dust. Balthasar stood both boots up together, gently lifted the little one up and then gently lowered him, until both his little feet were in the too heavy, too wide cases. With a proud bearing, one hand pressed into his side, the other touching his cap, the little one cried, “*Gratias, sir!*”, strode over to the horse, and grasped its reins. However, all attempts to reach the stirrups or scramble up onto the large animal were in vain. Balthasar, serious and gentle all the while, stepped over and lifted the little one up into the saddle. He may well have given himself too strong a push, because one moment he was sitting on top, the next he was lying on the ground again on the far side.

“Hold your horses, my dear M’sieu!” cried Fabian, once more bursting out into peals of laughter.

“To Hell with your dear M’sieur,” screamed the little one, quite enraged, beating the dust from his clothes, “I am a studiosus, and if you’re one too then it’s *Tusch*⁹ to laugh in my face like a lunatic, and you must fight me in Kerepes tomorrow!”

“Heavens!” cried Fabian, laughing incessantly, “Heavens, now that’s a solid lad, a Jack of all trades, when it comes to pluck and the proper code of conduct.”

And he lifted the little one up, despite all his struggling and wriggling, and placed him on the horse which, merrily neighing, immediately trotted away with its little master.

Fabian was holding both his sides, about to choke with laughter.

“It is cruel,” said Balthasar, “to laugh at a human being whom Nature has abandoned in such an appalling way as the little rider over there. If he really is a student, then you’ll have to fight him, and indeed with pistols, even if it runs contrary to all academic custom, as he’s unable to wield rapier or broadsword.”

“How seriously,” said Fabian, “how seriously, how gloomily you’re taking all this once again, my dear friend Balthasar. It has never occurred to me to laugh at a deformed person. But tell me: may such a gristly hop-o’-my-thumb mount a horse whose neck he can’t see over? May he stick his little feet into such despicably wide boots? May he wear a tight-fitting kurtha with a thousand laces and tassels, may he wear such a strange velvet cap? May he adopt such an arrogant, defiant bearing? May he force such hoarse, barbaric sounds from his throat? —

“May he do all this, I ask you, without being rightfully laughed at as a confirmed idiot? — But I must go in, I must be there to see the racket there’ll be when the knightly studiosus rides in on his proud steed! — You’re no fun at all today! Look after yourself!” Fabian ran back post-haste through the forest to the town.

Balthasar left the open road and lost himself in the deepest thickets, then sank down on a mossy spot, seized — indeed, overwhelmed — by the bitterest feelings. It may well have been that he truly loved the fair Candida,

but he had locked this love, like a deep, tender secret, in his innermost soul, hidden from human eyes, and indeed from his own. Now when Fabian spoke of it so openly, so thoughtlessly, he felt as if rough hands were boldly and arrogantly tearing down the veil from the Holy Image that he had not dared to touch; as if the Holy One must now be eternally angry with *him*. Yes, Fabian's words seemed to him an abominable mockery of his whole being, of his sweetest dreams.

“So,” he cried out in an excess of irritation, “so you hold me for an enamoured fop, Fabian! – for a fool who runs into Mosch Terpin’s lectures to at least spend a whole hour under the same roof as the lovely Candida, who wanders around the forest on his own to think up pitiful verses to his loved one and write them down even more pitifully, who spoils the trees by carving silly names in their flat bark, who cannot bring one intelligent word to market in the presence of girls, but only sighs and groans and makes lamentable faces, as if he were afflicted with cramp, who wears on his bare breast the faded flowers she wore on her bosom, or even the glove she lost – in short, who commits a thousand childish follies!

“And you tease me, Fabian, for this, and all the lads are no doubt laughing at me, for this, and I, together with the inner world that has opened up to me, am perhaps an object of mockery, for this. – And the fair – adorable – gorgeous Candida – ”

When he spoke this name, he felt a pain in his heart like the stab of a red-hot dagger! – Ah! – An inner voice very audibly whispered to him at that moment that he *did* enter Mosch Terpin’s house just for Candida’s sake, that he composed verses to his loved one, that he carved her name in deciduous trees, that he fell silent, sighed, groaned in her presence, that he wore the faded flowers she had lost on his breast, that he therefore really had fallen into all the follies that Fabian could possibly reproach him with. Now,

for the first time, he really felt how inexpressibly he loved the fair Candida; but at the same time he felt that, strangely enough, the purest, deepest love took on a somewhat foppish form in external reality – which could probably be ascribed to the deep irony nature had planted in all human activity. He may have been right; however, getting greatly annoyed at this was totally wrong. The dreams that would otherwise have enveloped him were lost, the voices of the forest sounded to him like mocking scorn; he ran back to Kerepes.

“Herr Balthasar – mon cher Balthasar,” a voice cried. Lifting his gaze, he stood rooted to the spot, for he saw Professor Mosch Terpin approaching, leading his daughter Candida by the arm. Candida greeted the petrified, statue-like youth with her characteristic cheerful, friendly naturalness.

“Balthasar, mon cher Balthasar,” cried the Professor, “you are, indeed, the most industrious, the most dear to me of my audience! – Oh my dear fellow, I see it in you, you love Nature and all her miracles as I do, I who have really doted on her! – Been botanizing again in our little forest, no doubt! – Found anything pleasant? – Now! – Let us become better acquainted. – Visit me – welcome at any time. – Can experiment together – Have you seen my air pump yet? – Now! – mon cher – tomorrow evening an intimate circle will assemble in my house, which will consume tea with bread and butter and amuse itself in pleasant conversation, increase it by your worthy person. – You will get to know a very attractive young man, been especially recommended to me – bonsoir, mon cher – good evening, excellent fellow – au revoir – Goodbye! You *are* coming to tomorrow’s lecture? – Now – mon cher, adieu!” – Without awaiting Balthasar’s reply, Professor Mosch Terpin strode away with his daughter.

Balthasar had been too alarmed to dare to lift his eyes, but Candida's looks burnt into his breast; he felt the scent of her breath, and sweet shudders trembled through his innermost being.

His ill-humour was completely dispelled; transported with delight, he followed the fair Candida with his eyes until she disappeared into the arbour. Then he slowly returned to the forest, to dream more marvellous dreams than ever.

Chapter Three

How Fabian did not know what to say. – Candida and young ladies, who should not eat fish. – Mosch Terpin's literary tea-party. – The young Prince.

Running down the straight track that cut across the forest, Fabian thought he would surely come out in front of the strange little squirt who had gone trotting on ahead. He was mistaken; stepping out of the bushes, he noticed in the far distance another, stately rider joining the little one: now both rode through the Kerepes Gate.

“Hm!” Fabian said to himself, “even if the Nutcracker has arrived before me on his large horse, I'll still be early enough to see the rumpus his arrival will cause. If the strange thing really is a student, he'll be directed to the ‘Winged Steed,’ and if he pipes up with his shrill Prr-Prr! in there, and throws his riding boots forward and himself after them, and acts wild and defiant when the lads laugh – well! – Then that'll put the icing on the cake!”

Now when Fabian reached the town, he thought he would meet nothing but laughing faces in the streets leading to the ‘Winged Steed.’ But this was not the case. Everyone was quiet and serious as they walked past. Several academics, who had assembled in the square before the ‘Winged

Steed,’ were walking up and down just as seriously and conversing among themselves. Fabian was convinced that the little one could not have arrived here at least, when, glancing through the inn-gate, he saw his easily recognizable horse being led to the stables. So he pounced on the first friend of his who came along and asked if an extremely strange, curious squirt had trotted in? The person questioned knew just as little of the matter as those others to whom Fabian now related all that had occurred with him and the hop-o’-my-thumb. They all laughed a lot, but assured him that such a thing as he was describing had in no wise arrived. Yet they could state that two very stately riders on beautiful horses had dismounted at the ‘Winged Steed’, barely ten minutes ago.

“Was one of them sitting on the horse that has just been led to the stables?” Thus asked Fabian.

“Certainly,” came the reply, “certainly. The one sitting on that horse was of a somewhat small stature, but he had a dainty physique, pleasant facial features and the most beautiful curly hair you could wish to see. Moreover, he showed himself to be the most superb rider, for he leapt down from his horse with as much agility, as much grace as our Fürst’s First Stablemaster.”

“And,” cried Fabian, “and didn’t lose his riding boots and roll up to your feet?”

“God forbid,” they replied with one voice, “God forbid! – What are you thinking of, brother! Such a skilled rider as the little one!”

Fabian just did not know what to say. Then Balthasar came down the street. Fabian rushed at him, pulled him over and recounted how the little squirt they had met before the gate when he fell from his horse had just arrived here and everyone took him to be a handsome man with dainty limbs and the most splendid rider.

“You see,” replied Balthasar in a calm, serious voice, “you see, my dear brother Fabian, that everyone does not attack those unfortunate people abandoned by Nature with unkind mockery as you do.”

“But for Heaven’s sake,” interrupted Fabian, “this most certainly isn’t a question of mockery and unkindness, but rather, if a three-foot high fellow not at all dissimilar to a radish can be called a handsome, dainty man?”

As concerned the stature and appearance of the little student, Balthasar had to confirm Fabian’s statement. The others maintained that the small rider was a handsome, dainty man, whereas Fabian and Balthasar persisted in claiming that they had never seen a more hideous hop-o’-my-thumb. It remained at that, and they all parted in total amazement.

Late evening fell; the two friends made their way home together. Then it escaped from Balthasar – he himself did not know how – that he had met Professor Mosch Terpin, who had invited him to his house on the following evening. “Oh, you happy,” cried Fabian, “oh, you happy, happy man – there you’ll see, hear, talk to your darling, the pretty Mademoiselle Candida!”

Balthasar, deeply wounded once more, tore himself free from Fabian and was about to disappear. Yet he reflected a moment, remained where he was and said, forcefully restraining his annoyance:

“You may be right, dear brother, when you hold me for a silly, enamoured fop; perhaps I really am. But this silliness is a deep, painful wound that has smitten my heart and which, touched in a careless way causing more intense pain, could incite me to all kinds of madness. And so, brother, if you really hold me dear, don’t mention the name Candida to me any more!”

“You’re taking,” replied Fabian, “you’re taking, my dear friend Balthasar, the matter in an awfully tragic light once again, and I well

suppose that nothing else is to be expected in your condition. But to avoid getting into all sorts of unpleasant discord with you, I promise that the name Candida will not pass my lips until you yourself give me occasion for it. Allow me just to add today that I foresee all sorts of troubles that your being in love will plunge you into. Candida is an extremely pretty, lovely young maid, but she isn't at all suited to your melancholic, passionate temperament. If you get to know her better, her open cheerful character will appear to you as a lack of poetry, which you find to be lacking everywhere. You will start all sorts of mysterious daydreams and everything will end tumultuously in dreadfully imagined grief and satisfactory despair. By the way, I too am invited for tomorrow to our Professor's, where he'll entertain us with some very pleasing experiments! – Now good night, fabulous dreamer! Sleep, if you can sleep before such an important day as the one approaching!"

With that Fabian left his friend, who had sunk into deep contemplation. It might be that Fabian had not foreseen all kinds of unhappy emotional moments between Candida and Balthasar without reason; for both character and temperament did indeed seem to provide sufficient cause.

Candida was, as everyone had to admit, as pretty as a picture, with eyes that shone straight into the heart and somewhat pursed rosy lips. Whether her beautiful hair, which she knew how to do up in quite fantastic, wondrous plaits, was more blond or more brunette, I have forgotten, I only remember very clearly its strange quality of becoming darker and darker the longer one looked at it. With her tall, slim stature and easy movement, the girl was grace, loveliness itself, especially when in the company of those with a zest for life; and with so much physical charm, one was only too willing to overlook the fact that her hands and feet could perhaps have been made slightly smaller and more dainty. Moreover, Candida had read

Goethe's 'Wilhelm Meister,' Schiller's poems and Fouqué's 'Der Zauberling' and then forgotten almost everything they contained; she played the pianoforte very tolerably, and from time to time even sang along as well; she danced the newest Françaises and Gavottes and wrote the laundry-list in an excellent, legible hand. If one absolutely *had* to find fault with the dear girl, it could perhaps lie in her talking in too deep a voice, lacing herself up too tightly, being pleased with a new hat for too long and consuming one cake too many with her tea.

There was perhaps much else about the pretty Candida that was not to the taste of effusive poets, but they *will* demand so much, won't they? For a start, they want the young lady to react to everything that passes their lips by falling into a somnambulatory delight, sighing deeply, rolling her eyes, and occasionally giving a little bit of a faint or even going momentarily blind as the highest stage of the most feminine femininity. Then the said young lady must sing the poet's songs to the melody that pours from the (that is, her) heart but immediately fall ill from this and even write verses herself, yet be very ashamed when word of this gets out, notwithstanding that the lady has herself pushed her verses, written in tender characters on very delicate fragrant paper, into the hands of the poet, who then in *his* turn is taken ill with delight – for which he cannot in the least be blamed. There are poetic ascetics who go even further and find it contrary to all female delicacy that a girl should laugh, eat and drink and dress herself neatly and fashionably. They are almost like the holy Hieronymus¹⁰, who forbids virgins to wear earrings and eat fish. They should – so the saint commands – only enjoy some prepared grass, constantly be hungry without feeling so, wrap themselves up in coarse, badly sewn clothes that hide their figure, and above all choose a female companion who is serious, pale, sad and somewhat dirty!

—

Candida was through and through a cheerful, open character, and so she believed there was nothing better than a conversation that flitted on the light, airy wings of the most harmless humour. She laughed really heartily at anything comical; she never sighed, unless rainy weather spoiled her anticipated walk or, despite all cautionary measures, a mark appeared on her new shawl. And yet, if there were real cause, a deep, inner feeling would glance through, that could never degenerate into shallow sentimentalism; and so to you and I, dear reader, we who do not belong to the effusive ones, the girl may be just right. It could very easily stand otherwise with Balthasar! – Yet we shall no doubt soon see to what extent the prosaic Fabian had prophesied correctly! –

That Balthasar could not get a wink of sleep that night for sheer restlessness, for an indescribable, sweet yearning: what could be more natural? Totally absorbed in the image of his loved one, he sat down at the table and wrote quite a number of fine, melodious verses, which depicted his condition in a mystical account of the nightingale's love for the crimson rose. He intended to take them with him to Mosch Terpin's Literary Tea-Party and let them loose at Candida's unprotected heart, whenever and however possible.

Fabian gave a slight smile when, according to arrangement, he came at the determined hour to pick up his friend Balthasar, and found him more dandily accoutered than he had ever seen him. He had put on a jagged collar of the finest Brussels edges; his short, slit-sleeved coat was of velvet. He was also wearing high, narrow-heeled French boots with silver fringes, an English hat of finest castor and Danish gloves. So he was dressed in a true German fashion, and the costume suited him extremely well, especially as he had had his hair beautifully frizzed and had neatly combed his little moustache.

Balthasar's heart trembled with delight when, in Mosch Terpin's house, Candida walked up to him, in the costume of the old German maiden, friendly and graceful in her looks and words, in her whole being, as one was accustomed to always seeing her.

"My fair young lady!" sighed Balthasar from the bottom of his heart when Candida, sweet Candida, personally offered him a cup of steaming tea. But Candida looked at him with shining eyes and said:

"Here is rum and maraschino, rusk and pumpernickel, dear Herr Balthasar, feel free to help yourself!"

But instead of looking at, or even helping himself to, rum and maraschino, rusk and pumpernickel, the enraptured Balthasar could not take his eyes – filled with the painful melancholy of the deepest love – off the fair maiden and he struggled for words to express from the depths of his soul just what he was feeling. But then the Professor of Aesthetics, a big, beefy man, grabbed him from behind with a forceful grip, spun him around, so that he spilt more tea on the floor than was quite proper, and shouted in a thundering voice:

"My good Lucas Cranach¹¹, don't guzzle that filthy water, you'll completely spoil your German stomach – in the room over there our brave Mosch has planted a row of the loveliest bottles of noble Rhenish wine, let's go and make them sing!"

And he dragged the unhappy youth away.

But Professor Mosch Terpin stepped out of an adjoining room into their path, leading a very strange little man by the hand and crying out:

"Here, Ladies and Gentlemen, I present to you a youth endowed with the highest, rarest talents, who will encounter no difficulty in acquiring your goodwill and your respect. It is young Herr Zinnober¹², who only arrived at our University yesterday and is proposing to study Law!"

Fabian and Balthasar recognized with the first glance the odd little squirt who had thundered towards them before the gate and fallen off his horse.

“So should I,” said Fabian quietly to Balthasar, “should I challenge the little alraun to blowpipes or to shoemaker’s awls? I mean, there are no other weapons I could use against this terrifying adversary.”

“Shame on you,” replied Balthasar, “shame on you for mocking the abandoned man who, as you have heard, possesses the rarest talents and so replaces by mental ability what Nature has denied him in the way of physical advantages.”

Then he turned to the little one and said, “I hope, my dear Herr Zinnober, that your fall from your horse yesterday did not perhaps have any unpleasant consequences?”

But Zinnober placed a small cane he carried on the ground behind him and pushed up, raising himself onto his tiptoes so that he almost came up to Balthasar’s belt; then he threw his head back into his neck, looked up with wildly sparkling eyes and said in a strangely grating bass:

“I don’t know what you want, what you’re talking about, sir! – Fallen off a horse? – I fallen off a horse? – You probably don’t know that I’m the best rider there can be, that I never fall off my horse, that I took part in the campaign as a volunteer in the Cuirassiers and gave instruction on riding manège to officers and the rank and file! – hm, hm – fall off a horse – I fall off a horse!”

With that he tried to turn quickly around, but the cane he was propped against slipped, and the little one reeled over at Balthasar’s feet. Balthasar reached down to help him up, and in so doing accidentally touched his head. Then the little one uttered a shrill scream that rang out throughout the room, making the guests shoot up with shock from their seats. Everyone

surrounded Balthasar and began to ask one another why, in the name of Heaven, he had screamed so dreadfully?

“Don’t take it amiss, my dear Herr Balthasar,” said Professor Mosch Terpin, “but that was a somewhat strange joke. For you probably wanted to make us believe that someone in this room had stepped on a cat’s tail!”

“Cat – cat – out with the cat!” cried a neurasthenic lady and then fainted at once; and with the cry: “Cat – cat” – a couple of old gentlemen who suffered from the same idiosyncrasy ran out the door.

Candida, who had poured out all of her smelling-bottle over the unconscious lady, said softly to Balthasar: “Just look at the mischief you’ve made with your nasty, shrill miaow, dear Herr Balthasar!”

The latter had no idea what was happening to him. His whole face fiery red with indignation and shame, he was unable to squeeze out one word to say that it was the little Herr Zinnober, not *he*, who had miaowed so horribly.

Professor Mosch Terpin saw how terribly embarrassed the youth was. He approached him with a smile and said: “Well, well, dear Herr Balthasar, please be calm. I saw everything that happened. Stooping to the ground and arching your back, then hopping on all fours, you gave a marvellous imitation of a fierce, maltreated tomcat. Normally I love such natural history pranks very much, but here in a literary tea-party –”

“But,” burst out Balthasar, “but, my excellent Herr Professor, it wasn’t *me*. ”

“All right – all right,” interrupted the Professor. Candida stepped up to them. “Comfort for me,” the Professor said to her, “do comfort the good Balthasar for me, he is thoroughly embarrassed about all the mischief that has occurred.”

The good-natured Candida felt sincerely sorry for poor Balthasar, who stood before her totally bewildered, with lowered eyes. She held out a hand to him and whispered, smiling gracefully: “What really funny people there are, being so awfully afraid of cats!”

Balthasar fervently pressed Candida’s hand to his lips. Candida rested the soulful gaze of her heavenly eyes on him. He was enraptured, in the highest Heaven, and thought no more about Zinnober and screaming cats.

The tumult was over; peace was restored. The neurasthenic lady sat at the tea-table, tucking into several rusks dunked in rum, and maintaining that such things refreshed the mind threatened by hostile forces, and that sudden shock gave way to eager hope! –

And the two old gentlemen, who really *had* had a fleeing tomcat run through their legs outside, returned pacified and, with several others, sought the gaming table.

Balthasar, Fabian, the Professor of Aesthetics and several young people sat down with the ladies. Herr Zinnober had in the meantime pulled up a footstool and with the help of the same climbed onto the sofa, where he now sat in the middle, between two women, throwing proud, flashing glances all around.

Balthasar believed that the right moment had arrived to step forward with his poem about the nightingale’s love for the crimson rose. He therefore said with proper coyness, as is the custom among young poets, that he – should he not be afraid of arousing aversion and inducing boredom, should he hope for the gracious forbearance of the honoured assembly – would dare to read out a poem, the most recent production of his muse.

As the women had already adequately discussed all the latest occurrences in the town; as the girls had well and truly talked through the last ball at the Präsident’s and even come to an agreement over the standard

shape of the latest hats; as the men could not count on any more food or drink within the next two hours, so Balthasar was invited with one voice on no account to withhold this splendid pleasure from the society.

Balthasar pulled out the neatly written manuscript and read.

His own work, which actually had poured forth with full force, with animated life, from a true poetic feeling, filled him with ever-rising enthusiasm. His reading, rising to ever-greater heights of passion, betrayed the inner ardour of the loving heart. He trembled with delight when gentle sighs – many quiet Ahs – from the women, many shouts of “Marvellous – splendid – divine!” from the men, convinced him that his poem had captivated everyone.

Finally he came to the end. Then everyone cried: “What a poem! – What thoughts – what an imagination – what beautiful verses – what melody – thank you – thank you, dear Herr Zinnober, for the divine pleasure!”

“Eh? What?” cried Balthasar; but no one paid any attention to him, rushing instead up to Zinnober, who puffed and blew on the sofa like a little turkey-cock and rasped in an unpleasant voice:

“You’re right welcome – right welcome – have to make do with it – is quite trivial, something I wrote in a rush only last night!”

But the Professor of Aesthetics shouted: “Splendid – divine Zinnober! – My bosom friend, after me you’re the greatest poet living! – Come to my breast, you beautiful soul!” – And he tore the little one up off the sofa and hugged and kissed him. Zinnober behaved in a very uncouth manner during this. He worked around with his little legs on the Professor’s fat stomach and screeched: “Let go’uv me – let go’uv me – you’re hurtin’ – hurtin’ – hurtin’ - I’ll scratch yer eyes out – I’ll bite yer nose in half!”

“No,” cried the Professor, setting the little one down on the sofa, “no, my fair friend, let us not take modesty too far!”

Now Mosch Terpin had also walked over from the gaming table; he took Zinnober's little hand, squeezed it, and solemnly said: "Splendid, young man! They did not exaggerate, no, they understated the lofty genius that fills your soul."

"And which of you," the Professor of Aesthetics now cried out with frenzied enthusiasm, "which of you young ladies will reward the marvellous Zinnober for his poem, expressing the deepest feeling of the purest love, with a kiss?"

Then Candida stood up, approached the little one with burning cheeks, kneeled down and kissed him with full lips on his horrible mouth.

"Yes," Balthasar now screamed, as if suddenly seized by madness, "yes, Zinnober – divine Zinnober, you wrote the profound poem on the nightingale and the crimson rose, the superb reward you've received is rightfully yours!"

And with that he dragged Fabian into an adjoining room and said:

"Do me the favour of taking a good, long look at me and then tell me, frankly and honestly, if I am the student Balthasar or not, if you are really Fabian, if we're in Mosch Terpin's house, if we're in a dream – if we're out of our wits – tweak my noise or shake me until I rattle, so I can only awake from this cursed masquerade!"

"How can you," replied Fabian, "how *can* you act so crazily, from sheer, naked jealousy, just because Candida kissed the little one? You yourself must admit that the poem the little one read out was indeed superb."

"Fabian," cried Balthasar with an expression of deepest amazement, "what are you saying?"

"Well yes," continued Fabian, "well yes, the little one's poem was superb and I don't grudge him Candida's kiss. – There do, incidentally, seem to be all sorts of things about the strange little man that are of greater worth

than a fine figure. But as concerns this figure itself, he appears to me now as anything but as hideous as in the beginning. While reading the poem his inner rapture beautified his facial features, so that he often appeared to me to be a graceful, well-grown youth, even though he barely reached above the table. Give up your useless jealousy and make a friend, as a poet, of the poet!"

"What," shouted Balthasar furiously, "what? Make a *friend* of the cursed changeling I'd like to throttle with these hands?"

"And so," said Fabian, "and so you're closing your mind to reason. But let's return to the room, where something must be going on, to judge by the loud cries of applause I can hear."

Balthasar mechanically followed his friend into the room.

When they entered, Professor Mosch Terpin was standing alone in the middle, still holding the instruments with which he had conducted some physics experiment or other, his face fixed with shock. The whole society had assembled around little Zinnober who, propped against his cane, stood there on his tiptoes and accepted the applause pouring in on him from all sides with a proud expression. Everyone turned again to the Professor, who was performing a new, very skilful trick. He had scarcely finished when, once again, everyone surrounded the little one, crying: "Marvellous – superb, dear Herr Zinnober!" –

Finally Mosch Terpin ran over to the little one and cried ten times louder than the others: "Marvellous – superb, dear Herr Zinnober!"

Among the society was the young Fürst Gregor, who was studying at the University. The Fürst had the most graceful figure one could wish to see, and with this, his behaviour was so noble and natural, that a lofty descent and the habit of moving in the most refined circles found clear expression.

And this same Fürst Gregor would not move from Zinnober's side and was praising him excessively as the most marvellous poet and the most accomplished physicist.

The group that the two formed, standing beside each other, was strange. Against the marvellously formed Gregor the mannikin stood out extremely oddly, being barely able, with his nose stuck up in the air, to keep himself on his thin little legs. The eyes of all the ladies were directed not at the Fürst, but at the little one who, raising himself on tiptoe, sank down again immediately afterwards, and so bobbed up and down like a Cartesian Devil.¹³

Professor Mosch Terpin came up to Balthasar and said: "What do you say to my protégé, to my dear Zinnober? He's a man of great depth, and now that I look at him more closely, I think I can guess the true story behind him. The preacher who brought him up and recommended him to me expressed himself in very mysterious terms about his origin. But just observe his noble grace, his refined, natural behaviour. He is certainly of aristocratic blood, perhaps even a King's son!"

At that moment it was announced that dinner was served. Zinnober staggered awkwardly over to Candida, clumsily grabbed her hand and led her to the dining room.

In a raging fury, the unfortunate Balthasar ran away, through the dark night, through whirling wind and rain, to his home.

Chapter Four

How the Italian violinist Sbiocca threatened to throw Herr Zinnober into the double-bass and the Referendarius Pulcher could not attain to Foreign Affairs. – Of customs officials and wonders withheld for the house. – Balthasar is enchanted by a knob-stick.

On a projecting, mossy rock in the loneliest part of the forest, Balthasar sat looking thoughtfully down into the depths where a foaming stream rushed between small rocks and thickly overgrown undergrowth. Dark clouds passed by and dipped down behind the mountains; the rustling trees and murmuring waters sounded like a muffled whimpering, and screeching birds of prey rose from the dark thicket up to the wide spaces in the sky, before sweeping after the fleeing clouds.

It seemed to Balthasar that he heard the wretched lament of Nature in the wonderful voice of the forest, that he himself must drown in this lament, that his whole being was merely a feeling of the deepest, most insurmountable pain. His heart felt about to burst with melancholy; and on the frequent occasions when tears dripped from his eyes, it seemed as if the spirits of the forest-stream were looking up at him and extending snow-white arms out of the waves to drag him down into the chilly deeps.

Then, from the far distance, there floated on the breeze the high-pitched, cheerful sound of horns, which settled soothing in his breast; and desire awoke in him along with sweet hope. He looked all around, and with the horns still sounding forth, the green shadows of the forest no longer seemed so sad, nor the soughing wind and the whispering bushes so plaintive. He began to speak.

“No,” he exclaimed, leaping up from his seat and looking into the distance with shining eyes, “no, all hope hasn’t yet disappeared! It’s only too certain that some sinister secret, some evil spell has come trampling into my life, but I’ll break this spell, even if it kills me!

“When I, carried away, overcome with the feeling that threatened to burst my breast at any moment, finally confessed my love to the fair, sweet Candida, didn’t I read my bliss in her eyes, didn’t I feel it in the pressure of her hand? – But as soon as that damned little monster appears, all love is

bestowed on *him*. It's on him, the accursed freak, that Candida glues her eyes, and longing sighs escape her breast when the clumsy youth approaches her or even touches her hand. – There must be some kind of mysterious explanation behind him, and if I were to believe in silly nurses' tales, I'd claim that the youth was bewitched and was able to, as the saying goes, score a hit with people. Isn't it madness, the way that everyone mocks and laughs at the misshapen, utterly slovenly manikin but then, when the little one steps among them, cries out that he's the most intelligent, most erudite, indeed the finest figure of a Herr Studiosus to be found? – What am I saying! Don't I myself almost think, doesn't it often occur to me too, that Zinnober may be clever and handsome? It's only in Candida's presence that the magic has no power over me; then Herr Zinnober is and remains a stupid, hideous little alraun.

“Anyway! – I will brace myself against the hostile power, a vague presentiment lies deep inside me that something or other unexpected will give me the weapons to fight the evil fiend!” –

Balthasar sought the road back to Kerepes. Strolling down a path through the trees, he noticed a small, loaded travelling-carriage on the country road, from which someone was heartily waving to him with a white handkerchief. Walking over, he recognised Herr Vincenzo Sbiocca, world-famous violin virtuoso, whom he esteemed exceedingly for his superb, expressive style of playing and with whom he had been taking lessons for the last two years.

“Good,” cried Sbiocca, leaping out of the carriage, “good, my dear Herr Balthasar, my cherished friend and pupil, good that I should meet you just here to be able to say a warm farewell to you.”

“What?” said Balthasar, “what, Herr Sbiocca, you are surely not leaving Kerepes where everyone respects and honours you, where no one could do without you?”

“Yes,” replied Sbiocca, the fire of inner rage flushing his face, “yes, Herr Balthasar, I leave a place where the people are, to a man, out of their minds, a place that resembles a large madhouse. – You were not at my concert yesterday, as you went into the country, otherwise you could have stood by me against the raging crowd, whom I succumbed to!”

“What has happened? In the name of God and all the angels, what has happened?” cried Balthasar.

“I play,” continued Sbiocca, “Viotti’s¹⁴ most demanding concerto. It is my pride, my joy. You have heard it by me, it has never left you unenthusiastic. Yesterday I was, I may well say so, in an especially good mood – I mean *anima*, in high spirits – I mean *spirito alato*. No violin-player in the whole wide world, Viotti himself could have matched me. When I am finished, applause breaks out in a frenzy – I mean *furore*, as I expected. Violin under arm, I step forward, to say a respectful thank you.

“But! What must I see, what must I hear! – Everyone, without taking the least notice of me, pushes their way into a corner of the hall and shouts: ‘Bravo – bravissimo, divine Zinnober! – What a performance – what posture, what expression, what skill!’ – I run over, force my way through! – A three-span high, deformed fellow stands there and unpleasantly rasps: ‘Please, not at all, played within my powers, am now admittedly the greatest violinist in Europe and the rest of the known world.’ – ‘Legion of Lucifers!’ I shout, ‘*who* played – I or the earthworm there?’ – And when the little one keeps on grating: ‘Please, at your service,’ I try to get at him and seize him, grabbing him by both sound-holes. But then they pounce on me and talk mad nonsense about envy, jealousy and resentment. In the meantime someone

cries: ‘And what composition!’ and then they all cry with one voice: ‘And what composition – divine Zinnober! – sublime composer!’ Even angrier than before I scream: ‘Is everyone *crazy – possessed*? The concerto was by Viotti and I – I – the world-renowned Vincenzo Sbiotta has played it!’ But now they get a firm grip of me, talk about Italian madness – I mean *rabbia* – about strange fits, take me by force to an adjoining room, treat me like I am an invalid, like I am a lunatic. It is not long before Signora Bragazzi rushes in and falls in a swoon. She had fared as I had. The moment her aria had ended, the hall rang out with: ‘Brava – bravissima – Zinnober,’ and everyone shouted that there were no such divas left on Earth as Zinnober, and he again began rasping his cursed: ‘Please – please!’

“Signora Bragazzi is in bed with a fever and will expire very soon; I, for my part, save myself from the crazy people by flight. Farewell, my dear Herr Balthasar! – Should you perhaps see the Signorino Zinnober, kindly tell him that he might not show his face in a concert at which I am present. Otherwise I would without fail grab him by his little beetly legs and sling him through the F-hole into the double-bass, he can play concertos and sing arias there to his heart’s content for the rest of his days. Farewell, my dear Balthasar, and do not put the violin to one side!”

With that Mr. Vincenzo Sbiocca embraced Balthasar – who was frozen stiff with astonishment – and climbed into the carriage, which rolled swiftly away.

“Then a’n’t I right,” said Balthasar to himself, “a’n’t I right, that sinister thing, that Zinnober, is bewitched, and scores a hit with people.”

At that moment a young man ran past, pale – distraught, madness and desperation on his face. This cut Balthasar to the quick. He believed he had recognised the youth as one of his friends and therefore ran quickly after him into the forest.

He had run barely twenty to thirty paces when he became aware of the Referendarius Pulcher, who had come to a halt beneath a large tree and, his eyes directed heavenwards, was saying:

“No! – tolerate this ignominy no longer! – All hope in life has gone! – Every prospect looks on to the grave – farewell – life – world – hope – my love – ”

And the despairing Referendarius pulled a pistol from his breast and pressed it to his forehead.

With lightning speed Balthasar rushed at him, flung the pistol far away from his hand and cried: “Pulcher! For God’s sake, what’s with you, what are you doing?”

The Referendarius could not come to his senses for several minutes. He had sunk down, semi-conscious, onto the grass; Balthasar had sat down beside him and was speaking all the words of comfort he could without knowing the cause of Pulcher’s despair.

Balthasar had asked a hundred times what terrible thing had happened to the Referendarius to set the black thought of suicide in motion inside him. Then Pulcher finally heaved a deep sigh and began:

“You know, my dear friend Balthasar, the dire straits I am in; you know how I have placed all my hopes on the position of Privy Dispatch Clerk that is vacant at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; you know the eagerness, the industriousness with which I have prepared for this. I had submitted my compositions which, as I discovered to my delight, met with the warmest approval from the Minister. With what confidence I presented myself for the oral examination this morning!

“In the room I found a malformed little man, whom you will probably know by the name of Herr Zinnober. The Legation Councillor, who was conducting the exam, walked up to me with a smile and told me that Herr

Zinnober had also applied for the position that I wished to be appointed to, he would therefore examine *both* of us. Then he softly whispered in my ear: ‘You have nothing to fear from your fellow applicant, my dear Referendarius, the papers little Zinnober submitted are terrible!’

“The examination began; I left none of the Councillor’s questions unanswered. Zinnober knew nothing, nothing at all; instead of answering, he rasped and squawked mumbled nonsense that no one could understand and also, by uncouthly thrashing about with his little legs, he fell off his high stool a few times, so that I had to lift him up again. My heart trembled with joy; the friendly glances the Councillor cast at the little one I took to represent the bitterest irony. – The examination was over.

“Who could describe my dismay – I felt as if a sudden thunderbolt had drummed me down fathom-deep into the ground – when the Councillor embraced the little one and said to him: ‘Marvellous man – what knowledge – what judgement – what astuteness!’ – then to me: ‘You have greatly disappointed me, Herr Referendarius Pulcher – you know absolutely *nothing!* – And – do not take it amiss – the way in which you may have given yourself courage for the examination runs counter to all decency, to all propriety! – You could not even stay on your stool – you kept falling off – and Herr Zinnober had to help you up. Now, diplomatic persons must be sober and level-headed. Adieu, Herr Referendarius!’

“I still believed it all to be a mad hallucination. I took the risk; I went to see the Minister. He sent out the message: how could I have the audacity to bother him with a visit after the way in which I had conducted myself in the examination – oh yes, he knew everything! The post I had been pushing for had already been allocated to Herr Zinnober! – And so some infernal power has robbed me of all hope, and I am ready and willing to sacrifice a life that has fallen victim to a dark fate! – Leave me!” –

“Nevermore!” cried Balthasar, “first listen to me!”

He now recounted everything he knew about Zinnober since his first appearance before the Kerepes Gate; how he had fared with the little one in Mosch Terpin’s house; what he had just now heard from Vincenzo Sbiocca. “It’s only too certain,” he then said, “that there is something mysterious behind all that the ill-fated freak does; and believe me, my friend Pulcher, if some hellish magic is involved, then it’s only a case of opposing it unflinchingly – victory is certain if only courage is at hand – so don’t be disconsolate, make no over-hasty resolutions. Let us unite and attack the witch’s imp!”

“Witch’s imp!” cried the Referendarius enthusiastically, “yes, witch’s imp, the little one is an utterly accursed witch’s imp, that’s certain! – But, brother Balthasar, what is wrong with us, are we dreaming? – Witchcraft – magic tricks – hasn’t that been over and done with for a long time now? Didn’t Fürst Paphnutius the Great, many years ago, establish Enlightenment and exile all the crazy mischief-makers, everything incomprehensible from the land – and yet such cursed contraband should have crept in? – Hell! This must be reported to the police and customs at once! – But no, no – only popular madness or, as I almost fear, monstrous corruption bears the guilt for our misfortune. – That cursed Zinnober is supposed to be immeasurably rich. Recently he was standing before the mint when the people pointed their fingers at him and cried: ‘Look at the handsome little Papa! All the shiny gold minted in there belongs to him!’”

“Peace,” replied Balthasar, “peace, friend Referendarius; the fiend does not force matters with gold, there’s something else behind it! – True, Fürst Paphnutius did establish Enlightenment for the greater good of his people and his descendants, but much that is magical and incomprehensible has remained. I think that some pretty wonders have been kept back for

home. For example, wretched seeds keep growing into the tallest, most marvellous trees, indeed even the most manifold fruits and types of cereal, which we stuff ourselves with. Why, the colourful flowers and insects are allowed to bear on their leaves and wings the most dazzling colours, even the most mystifying characters, which no one can tell whether they are in oil, gouache or watercolour; and no devil of a writing-master can read the neat gothic script, let alone copy it! – Ho ho! Referendarius, I’m telling you, from time to time something out-of-the-ordinary happens inside me! – I put my pipe to one side and walk up and down the room and a strange voice whispers, I myself am a miracle, the Magician Microcosm is working away inside me and driving me on to all sorts of mad pranks! – But then, Referendarius, I run away and look into Nature and understand everything that the flowers and the waters are saying to me, and the blessed joy of Heaven surrounds me!”

“You’re raving,” cried Pulcher; but Balthasar, without paying any attention to him, stretched his arms out into the distance, as if seized with an ardent longing.

“Just listen,” cried Balthasar, “just listen, oh Referendarius, to the heavenly music ringing out through the forest in the southing of the evening-wind! – Do you hear the springs raising their song ever louder? How the bushes, the flowers join in with delightful voices?”

The Referendarius put his hand to his ear to listen to the music Balthasar was talking about. “There are indeed,” he began, “there are indeed sounds blowing through the forest which are the most graceful, the most splendid I have heard in my life, and which penetrate deep into my soul. But it is not the evening wind, not the bushes, not the flowers that are singing so; it rather seems to me that someone in the distance is striking the lowest bells of a harmonica¹⁵. ”

Pulcher was right. The full chords, swelling louder and louder, reverberating nearer and nearer, really did resemble the sound of a harmonica, but one of incredible size and power. Now when the friends had walked on for a while, there presented itself to them a spectacle so enchanting that they stood frozen – rooted to the spot – with amazement. In the near distance a man, almost dressed in a Chinese manner, except that he wore a wide, billowing cap with lovely plumes on his head, was travelling slowly through the forest. His cart resembled an open mussel of sparkling crystal; both of the high wheels seemed to be of the same mineral. As they turned, so there rang out the marvellous harmonica sound the friends had heard from a distance. Two snow-white unicorns in a golden harness drew the cart, on which a silver pheasant sat in place of a driver, holding the golden reins in his beak. At the back there sat a large rose-beetle who, fluttering his shimmering wings, seemed to be fanning the magical man in the mussel with cool air. As soon as he drew level with the strangers, he gave them a friendly nod. At that moment there fell out of the sparkling knob of the long cane, that the man carried in his hand, a ray on Balthasar, so that he felt a burning stabbing deep within his breast and, starting, gave a muffled Ah! –

The man looked at him and smiled and waved even more warmly than he had previously. As soon as the magical cart had disappeared into thick bushes, accompanied all the while by the soft, slowly fading echo of the harmonica sounds, Balthasar threw his arms around his friend's neck, utterly transported with joy and delight, and cried: "Referendarius, we're saved! – That's the man who'll break Zinnober's despicable spell!"

"I don't know," said Pulcher, "I don't know how I feel at this moment, if I'm awake, if I'm dreaming; but so much is certain, that an unknown

feeling of bliss is coursing through me and hope and consolation are returning to my soul.”

Chapter Five

How Fürst Barsanuph breakfasted on Leipzig Larks and Danzig Gold Water, received a butter-smear on his cashmere trousers and elevated Privy Secretary Zinnober to Special Privy Councillor. – The picture-books of Doctor Prosper Alpanus. – How a porter bit the student Fabian’s finger, the latter wore a coat with a train and was therefore much laughed at. – Balthasar’s flight.

It can no longer be concealed that the Minister of Foreign Affairs, in whose department Herr Zinnober had been taken on as a Privy Dispatch Clerk, was a descendant of that Baron Prätextatus von Mondschein who had vainly sought the Fairy Rosabelverde’s family tree in Books of Tourneys and chronicles. He was called Prätextatus von Mondschein, like his ancestor; was of the choicest education and the most pleasant manners, never confused his ‘I’ and ‘Me’, his ‘Thou’ and ‘Thee’, and wrote his name in French characters as well as a generally legible hand; and he *himself* even worked from time to time, especially when the weather was bad. Fürst Barsanuph, a successor of the great Paphnutz, loved him dearly, for he had an answer for every question, played skittles with the Fürst in rest hours, was a dab hand at financial transactions and beyond compare at the Gavotte.

It so happened that the Baron Prätextatus von Mondschein had invited the Fürst to breakfast on Leipzig Larks and a drop of Danzig Gold Water. Now when he arrived in Mondschein’s house, he found little Zinnober in the entrance hall, among several pleasant diplomatic gentlemen; who, propped against his cane, flashed his little eyes at the Fürst and, without taking any further notice of him, shoved a roast lark he had just swiped from the table

into his mouth. As soon as the Fürst caught sight of the little one, he smiled gracefully at him and said to the Minister:

“Mondschein! And who is this handsome, intelligent little man you have in your house? – It must be the very same who has composed the admirably styled and beautifully written reports I have been receiving from you for some time?”

“Certainly, my noble Lord,” replied Mondschein, “Fate has brought me, in his person, the most ingenious, skilful worker in my bureau! He is called Zinnober, and I quite especially recommend the marvellous young man to your grace and favour, my dear Fürst! – He has only been with me a few days.”

“And for that very reason,” said a handsome young man, who had drawn near by this time, “and for that very reason my little colleague has, as Yr. Excellency will permit me to remark, dispatched nothing at all as of yet. The reports fortunate enough to be noticed by you, my most serene Fürst, with pleasure, were composed by me.”

“What are you after!” the Fürst angrily snapped at him.

Zinnober had pushed his way close to the Fürst and, consuming the lark, was smacking his lips greedily and hungrily.

It really was the young man who had composed those reports, but:

“What are you after,” cried the Fürst, “I don’t suppose you’ve lifted your quill yet? – And your consuming roast larks close up against me so that, as I must realise to my great annoyance, my new cashmere trousers have already received a butter-smear, your smacking so unreasonably in the process, yes! – All of that is sufficient proof of your utter unsuitability to any diplomatic career! – Now kindly go home and don’t show yourself before me again, unless you bring me a handy scouring-ball for my cashmere trousers. – Perhaps then I shall be in a gracious mood once more!”

Then to Zinnober: "Such youths as you, my worthy Zinnober, are a credit to the State and deserve to be distinguished with honour! – You are Special Privy Councillor, my man!"

"Thanks so much," rasped Zinnober, gulping down the last bite and wiping his mouth with both his little hands, "thanks so much, I'll do the thing all right, just as becomes me."

"Honest self-confidence," said the Fürst in a raised voice, "honest self-confidence shows the inner strength that must be inherent in the worthy statesman!"

And with this maxim the Prince took a dram of Gold Water, which the Minister himself handed to him and which did him a great deal of good.

The new Councillor had to sit down between the Fürst and the Minister. He consumed an unbelievable number of larks and drank Malaga and Gold Water indiscriminately and rasped and growled between his teeth and, as his pointed nose barely reached the table, worked his little hands and legs with some violence.

The breakfast at an end, both Prince and Minister cried: "He's an angelic being, this Special Privy Councillor!" - - -

"You look," said Fabian to his friend Balthasar, "you look so happy, your eyes are shining with a special fire. – Are you feeling happy? – Oh, Balthasar; it may be that you're dreaming a beautiful dream, but I have to wake you from it, it's a friend's duty!"

"What's wrong, what has happened?" asked Balthasar, alarmed.

"Yes," continued Fabian, "yes! – I must tell you! Only prepare yourself, my friend! Bear in mind that there is perhaps no misfortune in the world that hits home so hard and yet is more easily overcome than this one! – Candida" –

“Oh God!” shouted Balthasar, horrified, “Candida! – What about Candida? – Has she gone – is she dead?”

“Be calm,” Fabian went on, “be calm, my friend! – Candida isn’t dead, but as good as dead for you! – Know then, that little Zinnober has become Special Privy Councillor, and is as good as promised to the lovely Candida who, God knows how, is supposed to be totally crazy about him.”

Fabian believed that Balthasar would now break out in impetuous, despairing laments and curses. Instead of this he said with a calm smile: “If it’s nothing more than that, then there is no misfortune that could distress me.”

“You’re not in love with Candida any more?” asked Fabian in amazement.

“I love,” replied Balthasar, “I love the heavenly child, the marvellous maiden with all the fervour, with all the rapture that can be kindled only in the youthful breast! And I know – oh I know it, that Candida loves me in return, that she’s only ensnared in a despicable spell, but I’ll soon loosen the bonds set by this witch’s imp, I’ll soon destroy the fiend who has bewitched the poor girl.”

Balthasar now gave his friend a detailed account of the magical man he had met in the forest in the strangest cart. He concluded by saying that as soon as a ray from the knob of the magical being’s cane had sparkled into his breast, the conviction had arisen in him that Zinnober was nothing but a little sorcerer’s apprentice, whose power that man would destroy.

“But,” cried Fabian, when his friend had finished, “but Balthasar, how can you think of such odd, crazy rubbish? – The man you take to be a magician is none other than Doctor Prosper Alpanus, who lives in a country house not far from the town. It’s true that the most wondrous rumours are circulating about him, so that one could almost think of him as a second

Cagliostro; but he himself is to blame for this. He loves cloaking himself in a mystical darkness, taking on the appearance of a man who is intimate with the deepest secrets of nature and has unknown powers at his command, and so he gets the most bizarre ideas. For example, his cart is so strangely constructed that a man with an active, fiery imagination – like you, my friend – can easily be led to take everything to be an apparition out of some crazy fairy tale. Now listen!

“His cabriolet is mussel-shaped and silver-plated all over; there is a barrel-organ attached between the wheels that, as long as the carriage is in motion, plays of its own accord. What you took for a silver pheasant was certainly his small, white-clad jockey, just as certainly as you took the segments of an opened parasol for the wing-sheaths of a rose-beetle. He has had large horns screwed on to both of his white ponies for a really fabulous look. It is, by the way, true that Doctor Alpanus carries a beautiful cane with a marvellously sparkling crystal sitting as a knob on top, about whose wondrous powers one tells, or rather lies, so many fantastic things. The eye is supposedly scarcely able to bear the ray from this crystal. If the Doctor covers it with a thin veil and you then gaze at it steadily, the image of the person you bear in your innermost thoughts is supposed to appear on the outside as in a concave mirror.”

“Really,” Balthasar interrupted his friend, “really? Do people say that? – And what else do they say about the Doctor Prosper Alpanus?”

“Oh,” replied Fabian, “just don’t bother asking me to say much about the crazy pranks and farces. You know fine well that there are, even today, adventurous people who against sound reason believe in all the so-called wonders of silly nurses’ tales.”

“May I confess to you,” continued Balthasar, “that I am forced to count myself as one of the party of these adventurous people lacking sound

reason. Silver-plated wood is not radiant, transparent crystal, a barrel-organ does not sound like a harmonica, a silver pheasant is not a jockey nor a parasol a rose-beetle. Either the magical man I met was not the Doctor Prosper Alpanus you are talking about, or the Doctor really does have control over the most extraordinary secrets.”

“In order,” said Fabian, “in order to thoroughly heal you of your strange daydreams, it’s best that I lead you straight away to Doctor Prosper Alpanus. Then you will feel for yourself that the Herr Doctor is a totally ordinary doctor and doesn’t in any way go for a drive with unicorns, silver pheasants and rose-beetles.”

“You express,” replied Balthasar, his eyes sparkling brightly, “you express, my friend, my soul’s dearest wish. – Let us start on our way at once.”

Soon they were standing before the locked gate to the park in the middle of which lay Doctor Alpanus’s country house. “So how do we get in?” said Fabian.

“I think we knock,” replied Balthasar, and he grabbed the metal knocker fixed close to the lock. –

As soon as he lifted the knocker, there began a murmuring underground, like distant thunder, that seemed to die away in the deepest depths. The gate slowly opened; they entered and walked along a long, wide, tree-lined path, down which they caught sight of the country house.

“Can you feel,” said Fabian, “something extraordinary, something magical here?”

“I thought,” replied Balthasar, “the way in which the gate opened wouldn’t have been so totally ordinary, but then I don’t know – everything here makes such a wonderful, such a magical impression on me. – Can such marvellous trees as the ones here in this park be found for miles around? –

Yes, many a tree, many a bush does indeed seem, with its glistening trunks and emerald leaves, to belong to a foreign, unknown land.”

Fabian noticed two unusually large frogs that had been hopping along at each side of the walkers ever since the gate. “A beautiful park,” cried Fabian, “in which there is such vermin!”, and he bent down to pick up a small stone that he intended to throw at the frisky frogs. Both sprang into the bushes and peeked at him with shining human eyes. “Wait, wait!” cried Fabian, as he aimed at one, and threw. But at that moment an ugly little woman, sitting on the road, screeched: “Lout! He shouldn’t throw at honest folk, who must earn their bit of bread by hard work here in the garden!”

“Come on, come,” murmured Balthasar, horrified, for he noticed all too clearly that the frog had turned into the old woman. A glance in the bushes convinced him that the other frog, now become a little man, was busy pulling up weeds. —

Before the country house there was a large, beautiful lawn, on which both unicorns were grazing, while the most marvellous chords were ringing in the air.

“Now do you see, do you hear?” said Balthasar.

“I see nothing more,” replied Fabian, “than two small white horses eating grass, and as for that music in the air, it’s probably hanging Aeolian harps.”

The marvellous, simple architecture of the moderately sized, one-storey country house delighted Balthasar. He pulled the bell-cord, the door opened at once, and a large, all golden-yellow gleaming bird, resembling an ostrich, stood before the friends as porter.

“Now look,” said Fabian to Balthasar, “now just take a look at that crazy livery! – If you wanted to give this man a tip later on, does he actually have a hand to put it in his waistcoat-pocket with?”

And he turned to the ostrich, grabbed him by the shining down-feathers that were ruffling out like a rich jabot¹⁶ on its throat beneath its beak, and said: “He will announce us to the Herr Doctor, my charming friend!”

But the ostrich said nothing more than, “Quirrr” – and bit Fabian’s finger.

“Hell’s bells!” shouted Fabian: “he really *is* a bloody bird!”

At the same moment an inner door opened, and the doctor himself walked towards the friends. – A thin, pale little man! – He wore a small velvet cap on his head, from which long locks of beautiful hair streamed out, a long, earthen-yellow Indian gown and little red-laced boots, whether trimmed with coloured leather or the gleaming feathered skin of a bird, it was impossible to tell. Calm, good nature itself lay on his countenance; it just seemed strange that when one looked at him really closely, really keenly, it was as if another, smaller face were looking out of this face, as out of a glass case.

“I saw,” Prosper Alpanus now said, softly, with a slight drawl and a graceful smile, “I saw you, gentlemen, from my window, I knew a long time ago that you would be coming to see me – at least as far as you are concerned, my dear Balthasar. – Be so good as to follow me!” –

Prosper Alpanus led them into a high, round room, hung all around with sky-blue curtains. The light fell through a window fixed in the top of the dome and threw its rays onto the polished sparkling marble table, supported by a sphinx, that stood in the middle of the room. Apart from this there was absolutely no sign of anything extraordinary in the chamber.

“Now how can I be of service to you?” asked Prosper Alpanus.

Then Balthasar composed himself, recounted what had happened with little Zinnober ever since his first appearance in Kerepes, and concluded with the assurance that the conviction had arisen in him that he, Prosper

Alpanus, was the benevolent magus who would put a stop to Zinnober's depraved, heinous sorcery.

Prosper Alpanus remained silent, in deep thought. Finally, after a good few minutes had passed, he began, with a serious expression, in a deep tone:

"After all that you have told me, Balthasar, it is not open to any doubt that there is a special, mysterious explanation behind little Zinnober. – But one must first of all know the enemy one is fighting, know the cause whose effect one intends to destroy. – It is to be presumed that little Zinnober is nothing other than a mandrake. Let's have a look and see."

And Prosper Alpanus tugged at one of the silk ropes that were hanging from the ceiling. A pair of curtains swished open, large folio volumes in gilt cases became visible, and a dainty, air-light flight of cedar steps rolled down. Prosper Alpanus climbed these steps and fetched a folio from the uppermost row, which he laid on the marble table, having first carefully dusted it with a large bundle of gleaming peacock's feathers.

"This work," he then said, "deals with mandrakes, who are all depicted inside; perhaps you will find your enemy Zinnober among them, and then he's delivered into our hands."

When Prosper Alpanus opened the book, the friends saw a number of neatly illuminated copperplates portraying the most utterly astonishing, misshapen manikins with the wildest grimacing faces one could possibly see. But as soon as Prosper touched one of these manikins on the page, it came to life, sprang out and flitted and hopped around on the marble table in a really comical way and snapped its little fingers and performed the most wonderful pirouettes and entrechats, while singing Quirr, Quapp, Pirr, Papp, until Prosper grabbed it by the head and placed it back in the book, where it immediately flattened and evened itself out into a colourful picture.

All the pictures in the book were examined in this way, but whenever Balthasar was just about to cry, “That’s him, that’s Zinnober!” he had however, on closer examination, to discover, much to his chagrin, that the manikin was not Zinnober at all.

“Now that is *very* strange,” said Prosper Alpanus, when the book was finished.

“Yet,” he continued, “Zinnober could perhaps be an Earth Spirit. Let’s have a look.”

And he hopped, with a rare agility, up the steps once more, fetched another folio, gave it a good dusting, and laid it on the marble table and opened it, saying: “This work deals with the Earth Spirits, perhaps we’ll catch Zinnober in this book.”

Once again, the friends saw a number of neatly illuminated copperplates, which portrayed hideously ugly brownish-yellow fiends. And when Prosper Alpanus touched them, they raised whining, screeching, plaintive cries and finally crept clumsily out and rolled around the marble table, growling and groaning, until the Doctor pressed them back into the book.

Balthasar had not found Zinnober among these figures, either.

“Strange, most strange,” said the Doctor, and he fell into silent contemplation.

“The Beetle-King,” he then continued, “the Beetle-King is out of the question, for he is, as I know for certain, occupied elsewhere at this precise moment; Spider-Marshall too, for Spider-Marshall may be ugly, but he’s intelligent and skilful, and earns his living with his hands, without presuming to other actions. – Strange – very strange.” –

He fell silent again for some minutes, so that one could clearly hear all kinds of wonderful voices which, now in single notes, now in full, swelling chords, rang out all around.

“You have really charming music, all around and all the time, dear Doctor,” said Fabian. Prosper Alpanus seemed not to be paying the slightest attention to Fabian; he was contemplating only Balthasar, while first stretching out both arms towards him and then tapping him with his fingertips, as if he were sprinkling him with invisible drops.

Finally the Doctor took hold of both of Balthasar’s hands and said in friendly earnest: “Only the purest consonance of the psychological principle in the law of Dualism will favour the operation I am now about to undertake. Follow me!” –

The friends followed the Doctor through several rooms which contained nothing in the least curious, apart from some strange animals who were busy reading – writing – painting – dancing, until a double door opened and the friends stepped up to a thick curtain, behind which Prosper Alpanus disappeared, leaving them in deep darkness. The curtain rustled open, and the friends found themselves in an, as it seemed, oval room, lit by a magical chiaroscuro. It was, if one looked at the walls, as if one’s gaze lost itself in boundless green groves and flowery meadows with babbling springs and streams. The mysterious scent of an unknown aroma surged up and down and seemed to carry the sweet sounds of the harmonica back and forth. Prosper Alpanus appeared dressed all in white like a Brahman and placed a large, round crystal mirror, over which he threw a veil, in the middle of the hall.

“Step in front,” he said in a muffled, ceremonial voice, “step in front of this mirror, Balthasar, focus your thoughts firmly on Candida – *want* her

with your whole soul to show herself to you at the moment now existing in space and time.”

Balthasar did as he was instructed, while Prosper Alpanus positioned himself behind him and described circles around him with both hands.

After a few seconds, a bluish haze seethed out of the mirror. The delightful figure of Candida, fair Candida appeared, bursting with life! But beside her, close beside her sat the repulsive Zinnober and squeezed her hands, kissed her – and Candida had wrapped an arm around the fiend and was caressing him!

Balthasar was about to yell out, but Prosper Alpanus gripped him firmly by both shoulders, and the cry suffocated in his breast.

“Calm,” said Prosper, softly, “calm, Balthasar! Take this cane and strike the little one, but do not move from the spot.”

Balthasar did so and perceived, to his pleasure, the little one writhing, tumbling over, rolling on the ground! – In his fury he sprang forward, then the image melted away into mist and haze, and Prosper Alpanus forcefully dragged the raging Balthasar back, shouting: “Stop! – If you shatter the magic mirror, then we’re all lost! – Let’s go back into the light.”

At the Doctor’s behest the friends left the hall and walked into an adjoining, bright room.

“Heaven,” cried Fabian, drawing deep breaths, “Heaven be thanked that we’re out of that cursed hall. The muggy air almost squeezed all the blood out of my heart, and then on top of that those ridiculous conjuring tricks, which I detest with my innermost soul.”

Balthasar was about to answer when Prosper Alpanus entered.

“It is,” he said, “it is certain, as of now, that misshapen Zinnober is neither a mandrake nor an Earth Spirit, but an ordinary human. But there is some secret, magical power at work, which I have not yet succeeded in

recognising, and that is the reason why I cannot yet be of any help. – Come and visit me again soon, Balthasar, we shall see then what more can be done. Goodbye!”

“So,” said Fabian, walking right up to the Doctor, “so you’re a wizard, Herr Doctor, and with all your magic you can’t even attack that pitiful little Zinnober? – Do you perhaps know that I take you, with all your colourful pictures, little puppets, magic mirrors, with all your grotesque junk, for a complete and utter charlatan? – Balthasar here, he’s in love and writes verses, you can make him believe all sorts of rubbish; but you won’t have much success with me! – I am an enlightened man and I tolerate no miracles, none at all!”

“Think of it,” replied Prosper Alpanus, laughing more loudly and heartily than one could have believed his whole being to be capable of, “think of it, whatever you want to. But – even if I’m not exactly a wizard, I nevertheless have at my command some delightful little tricks.”

“Out of Wieglob’s ‘Magie’,¹⁷ or somewhere else!” – cried Fabian. “Now, there you find your master in our Professor Mosch Terpin and cannot compare with him, because the honest man always shows us that everything happens naturally, and doesn’t in any way surround himself with such mysterious trappings as you, Herr Doctor. – Now, I take my most respectful leave of you.”

“Oh,” said the Doctor, “you’re not going to take your leave of me in such a temper, are you?”

And he gently struck Fabian several times on both arms, down from the shoulder to the wrist, so that the latter felt quite peculiar and anxiously cried: “But what are you doing, Herr Doctor!”

“Go, gentlemen,” said the Doctor, “you, Herr Balthasar, I hope to see again very soon. – Help will soon be found!”

“He will *not* be receiving a tip, my friend,” cried the departing Fabian to the golden-yellow porter, grabbing him by the jabot. But again the porter said nothing more than “Quirrr” and bit Fabian’s finger once more.

“Beast!” cried Fabian, and he ran away.

Both frogs did not fail to politely accompany both friends to the gate, which opened and shut with a dull thundering.

“I really,” said Balthasar, as he strolled down the country road behind Fabian, “I really don’t know, brother, why you’ve put such a strange coat on today, with such appallingly long tails and such short sleeves.”

Fabian discovered, to his astonishment, that his short coat had grown down towards the ground at the back, whereas the sleeves, normally of a more-than-adequate length, had shrunk up to his elbows.

“Hell Almighty, what’s this!” he cried and pulled and tugged at the sleeves and hitched his shoulders. And that did seem to help; but when they passed through the city-gate, then the sleeves shrank up and the coattails grew down, so that despite all pulling and tugging and hitching, the sleeves were soon sitting up on Fabian’s shoulders, exposing his bare arms; so that a train was soon rolling after him, stretching out longer and longer. Everyone stood still and roared with laughter, the street arabs ran over the long gown by the dozen, shouting and cheering, and knocked Fabian over; and when he picked himself up, no piece of the train was missing, no! – It had become even longer. And the laughter, shouting and cheering became ever wilder and wilder, until at last Fabian, half demented, rushed into an open house.

And the train immediately disappeared.

Balthasar had no time at all to wonder much at Fabian’s strange bewitchment; for the Referendarius Pulcher grabbed him, dragged him into a back street and said:

“How is it possible that you haven’t left yet, that you can still show your face here, when the beadle is even now pursuing you with an arrest-warrant?”

“What’s that, what are you talking about?” asked Balthasar, totally amazed.

“The madness,” continued the Referendarius, “the madness of jealousy carried you so far away that you violated household rights, breaking into Mosch Terpin’s house with hostile intent, that you attacked Zinnober beside his fiancée, that you beat the misshapen hop-o’-my-thumb half to death!”

“Come off it!” shouted Balthasar, “I haven’t been in Kerepes all day, disgraceful lies!”

“Oh quiet, quiet,” interrupted Pulcher, “Fabian’s crazy, nonsensical idea of putting on a dress with a train has saved you. No one is taking any notice of you now! – Just evade humiliating confinement, we’ll fight out the rest all right. You mustn’t go back to your flat! – Give me the key, I’ll send everything on to you. – Now go to Hoch-Jakobsheim!”

And with that the Referendarius dragged Balthasar away through remote alleys, out of the gate towards Hoch-Jakobsheim village, where the famous scholar Ptolomäus Philadelphus was writing his curious book about the unknown tribe of students.

Chapter Six

How Special Privy Councillor Zinnober had his hair combed in his garden and had a dew-bath in the grass. – The Order of the Green-Spotted Tiger. – The happy idea of a Theatrical Costumerer. – How Fräulein von Rosenschön poured coffee on herself and Prosper Alpanus assured her of his friendship.

Professor Mosch Terpin was floating in sheer delight.

“Could anything,” he said to himself, “could anything more fortunate have happened to me than the excellent Special Privy Councillor entering my house as a Studiosus? – He marries my daughter – he becomes my son-in-law, through him I gain the favour of the excellent Prince Barsanuph and climb up the ladder my marvellous little Zinnober has clambered up before me.

“It’s true that it often strikes me as incomprehensible how the girl, Candida, can be so utterly infatuated with the little one. Normally women look for a handsome exterior rather than for special intellectual gifts; and from time to time when I look at the special little man, it seems to me as if he could not exactly be called handsome – even – *bossu* – quiet – Shh – Shh – walls have ears. He’s the Fürst’s favourite, will rise higher and higher – upwards and onwards and he’s my son-in-law!”

Mosch Terpin was right; Candida expressed the most decided fondness for the little one and, if it was given to understand by someone, here or there, whom Zinnober’s strange masquerade had not enchanted, that the Special Privy Councillor was actually just an awkward, misshapen thing, she immediately began to talk about the wonderfully beautiful hair with which Nature had endowed him.

But no one smiled, when Candida spoke thus, more maliciously than the Referendarius Pulcher.

This man dogged Zinnober’s steps, and he was loyally assisted in this by Privy Secretary Adrian, the very same young man whom Zinnober’s spell had almost driven out of the Minister’s Bureau and who only regained the Fürst’s favour by means of the splendid scouring-ball he handed him.

The Special Privy Councillor Zinnober lived in a beautiful house with an even more beautiful garden, in the middle of which there was a square,

surrounded by thick bushes, where the most marvellous roses bloomed. It had been observed that on every ninth day Zinnober quietly got up at dawn, dressed himself, however difficult this may have been, without any help from his servants, descended into the garden and disappeared in the bushes surrounding the square.

Pulcher and Adrian, suspecting some secret or other, dared one night, when Zinnober, as they had learnt from his valet, had last visited the square nine days previously, to climb over the garden wall and hide themselves in the bushes.

Morning had barely broken when they saw the little one walking up, snuffling and snorting; his passage taking him through the middle of a flowerbed, the dewy blades and shrubs were knocking against his nose.

When he stepped onto the lawn, among the roses, a sweet-sounding wind shook the bushes, and the scent of roses became sharper. A beautiful, veiled woman with wings on her shoulders floated down, sat down on the dainty chair placed in the middle of the rose-bushes, laid her hands on Zinnober with the gentle words, “Come, my dear child,” and combed his long hair, that flowed down his back, with a golden comb. This seemed to do the little one a great deal of good, for he blinked his little eyes and s-t-r-e-t-c-h-e-d out his little legs and groaned and grumbled almost like a tomcat. This had lasted around five minutes, when the magical woman ran a finger along the little one’s parting, and Pulcher and Adrian perceived a narrow, fiery-coloured sparkling stripe on Zinnober’s head. Now the woman said:

“Farewell, my sweet child! – Be clever, be as clever as you can!”

The little one said, “Adieu, little mother, I’m clever enough, you really don’t need to repeat that to me so often.”

The woman rose slowly and disappeared in the breeze.

Pulcher and Adrian were dumbfounded. But when Zinnober was about to stride away, the Referendarius leapt out and shouted: “Good morning, Herr Special Privy Councillor! Oh, how beautifully you have had your hair done!”

Zinnober glanced around and attempted, when he espied the Referendarius, to run quickly away. But being as awkward and weakly on his little legs as he was, he stumbled and fell into the tall grass, which clapped its blades together over him, and he lay in a bath of dew. Pulcher came running up and helped him onto his feet, but Zinnober croaked at him: “Sir, how did you get into my garden? Go to hell!”

And he hopped and ran, as fast as he was able, into the house.

Pulcher wrote to Balthasar about this miraculous occurrence and promised to double his surveillance of the magical little monster. Zinnober appeared to be inconsolable over what had happened to him. He had himself put to bed and moaned and groaned so, that the news of his sudden illness soon reached Minister Mondschein, and then Fürst Barsanuph.

Fürst Barsanuph immediately sent his personal physician to the little favourite.

“My most excellent Special Privy Councillor,” said the personal physician on taking his pulse, “you are sacrificing yourself for the State. Intense work has thrown you onto your sickbed; incessant thought has caused the unutterable suffering you must be experiencing. Your countenance looks very pale and haggard, but your worthy head is glowing terribly! – Oh, oh! – But no inflammation of the brain? Should the welfare of the State have brought about something like this? – Hardly possible! – Allow me!”

The personal physician had probably noticed that same red stripe on Zinnober’s head that Pulcher and Adrian had discovered. After having tried

several magnetic strokes from a distance, and breathed on the patient several times, at which the latter noticeably mewled and fluted, he intended to run his hand over Zinnober's head and touched it unexpectedly. Then Zinnober, foaming with rage, leapt into the air and gave the personal physician, who had just bent down over him, such a solid box on the ears with his bony little hand that it echoed all around the room.

“What d’you want,” screamed Zinnober, “what d’you want from me, what’re you doing crawling around on my head! I’m not the least bit sick, I’m healthy, really healthy, I’ll get up at once and go to the Minister’s meeting: clear off!”

The personal physician rushed away, terrified. But when he told Fürst Barsanuph how he had fared, the latter exclaimed delightedly: “What zeal for serving the State! What dignified, what sovereign behaviour! – What a man, this Zinnober!” - - -

“My dear Special Privy Councillor,” said Minister Prätextatus von Mondschein to little Zinnober, “how marvellous it is that you, paying no attention to your illness, have come to the meeting. I have, in the important affair of the Kakatuk Court, drawn up a memorandum – drawn it up *myself* and I ask that *you* read it out to the Fürst, for your stimulating reading will elevate the whole document, for the composer of which the Prince will then recognise me.”

The memorandum, with which Prätextatus intended to shine, had however been composed by none other than Adrian.

The Minister made his way with the little one to the Fürst.

Zinnober pulled the memorandum the Minister had given him out of his pocket and began to read. As, however, he just could not get going with

it, and he only purred and whirred incomprehensible nonsense, the Minister took the paper out of his hands and read himself.

The Fürst seemed utterly delighted; he let his approval be known, crying over and over again: “Great – well said – superb – brilliant!”

As soon as the Minister had finished, the Fürst strode straight up to little Zinnober, lifted him up into the air, pressed him to his breast – at the exact spot where he (the Fürst) wore the large Star of the Green-Spotted Tiger – and stammered and sobbed, streams of tears pouring from his eyes:

“No! – Such a man – such a talent! – Such zeal – such love – it’s too much – too much!”

Then more composedly: “Zinnober! – I hereby elevate you to be my Minister! – Remain loyal and true to your fatherland, remain an upright servant of Barsanuph, by whom you are honoured – loved.”

And now turning with angry eyes to the Minister: “I observe, dear Baron von Mondschein, that your powers have been diminishing for some time. Rest on your estates will be beneficial to you! – And so farewell!”

Minister von Mondschein departed, muttering inaudible words between his teeth and throwing flashing glances at Zinnober who, after his fashion, leaning his back into his little cane, raised himself up high on his tiptoes and looked around proudly and saucily.

“I must,” the Fürst now said, “I must honour you at once, my dear Zinnober, according to your high desert; therefore please receive from my hands the Order of the Green-Spotted Tiger!”

Now the Fürst wanted to drape the ribbon, which he had been hastily handed by his valet, around Zinnober; but his misshapen physique meant that the ribbon would not sit normally at all, but now screwed up quite improperly, now unacceptably hung down loose.

The Prince was in this, as well as in any other such affair concerning the essential good of the State, very exact. The Order-Sign of the Green-Spotted Tiger situated on the ribbon had to sit between the hip-bone and the coccyx, three-sixteenths of an inch above the latter, at an angle. This could not be achieved. The valets, three pages, then the Fürst tried a hand; all their efforts were in vain. The treacherous ribbon slipped back and forth, and Zinnober began to squawk ill-humouredly: “Why’re you fiddling around so terribly with my body, just let the stupid thing hang how it wants to, I’m a Minister here to stay and that’s that!”

“And why,” said the Fürst, angrily, “and why do I have Order Councils, when such mad shapes exist, as concerns ribbons, which run completely contrary to my will? – Patience, my dear Minister Zinnober! We will soon see about this!”

At the Fürst’s command, the Order Council now had to assemble – with the addition of two philosophers and a natural scientist who, returning from the North Pole, was travelling through at that time – to discuss the question of the most practical way in which to fit the ribbon of the Green-Spotted Tiger on Minister Zinnober. In order to build up the requisite strength for this important discussion, all the members were instructed not to think during the preceding week; but to be able to execute this more effectively and yet remain in active State service, to occupy themselves in the meantime with book-keeping. The roads before the palace where the Order Councillors, philosophers and natural scientist were to hold their meeting were covered with thick straw, so that the rattling of carriages would not disturb the sages; and for this very reason it was forbidden to beat a drum, make music, indeed even to speak loudly in the vicinity of the palace. In the palace itself everyone faltered around in thick felt shoes, and one communicated by making signs.

The meetings had lasted for seven whole days, from early morning into the late evening, and there was still no resolution in sight.

The Fürst, near the end of his patience, kept sending messages, informing them that they must in Satan's name eventually come up with *some* bright idea. But that was no help at all.

The natural scientist had, as far as was possible, investigated Zinnober's constitution, taken the height and breadth of the outgrowth on his back, and submitted the most exact calculations based upon this to the Order Council. He was also the one who finally suggested that one could perhaps call the Theatrical Costumerer into the discussion.

As strange as this suggestion may appear, it was nevertheless, in the state of fear and need all found themselves in, unanimously accepted.

The Theatrical Costumerer Herr Kees was an exceedingly deft, sharp man. As soon as the troublesome case was put before him, as soon as he had checked through the natural scientist's calculations, he had the most superb method at hand, through which the ribbon could be brought to sit in the normal fashion.

Which was that a certain number of buttons should be attached to breast and back and the ribbon buttoned on to these. The experiment was an immeasurable success.

The Fürst was delighted and approved the Order Council's suggestion that the Order of the Green-Spotted Tiger should from now on be divided into various classes, according to the number of buttons with which it was given. For example: Order of the Green-Spotted Tiger with two buttons – with three buttons etc. The Minister Zinnober received, as a quite especial mark of distinction, which no one else could demand, the Order with twenty diamond buttons, for exactly twenty buttons were required for his strangely-shaped body.

The Costumerer Kees received the Order of the Green-Spotted Tiger with two golden buttons; and because the Fürst regarded him as a bad tailor, despite his happy idea, and therefore did not wish to be fitted out by him, he was named as the Prince's Actual Privy Great Costumerer. - - -

From the window of his country house Doctor Prosper Alpanus was looking thoughtfully down into his park. He had been busy all night casting Balthasar's horoscope, and had in the process found out much that bore relation to little Zinnober. But the most important thing for him was what had happened with the little one in the garden, when Adrian and Pulcher had eavesdropped on him. Prosper Alpanus was just about to call out to his unicorns that they might fetch the mussel, because he wished to travel to Hoch-Jakobsheim, when a carriage came rattling up and stopped before the gate to the park. It was said that Sister von Rosenschön wished to talk to the Herr Doctor.

“Most welcome,” said Prosper Alpanus, and the lady walked in. She wore a long black dress and was shrouded in a veil like a matron. Prosper Alpanus, seized by a strange suspicion, took his cane and dropped the sparkling rays from the knob onto the lady. Then it was as if lightning flashed and swished around her, and she stood there in white, transparent garments, shining dragonfly-wings on her shoulders, and white and red roses woven into her hair.

“Well, well,” whispered Prosper; he tucked the cane under his dressing gown, and at once the lady stood there in her previous costume.

Prosper Alpanus cordially invited her to sit down. Fräulein von Rosenschön now said that it had been her intention for a long time to call on the Herr Doctor in his country house, to make the acquaintance of a man whom the whole region extolled as a highly talented, charitable sage. He

would certainly grant her request that he take on the medical duties of the nearby convent, as the old ladies there were often sickly and received no assistance. Prosper Alpanus politely replied that, although he had given up his practice a long time ago, he would nevertheless by way of exception visit the convent ladies when necessary, and he then asked if she herself, Fräulein von Rosenschön, was perhaps suffering from some illness or other? The Fräulein assured him that she felt a rheumatic twitching in her limbs from time to time, when she caught a cold from the early morning air, but was now quite healthy; and she began to talk about indifferent matters. Prosper asked if she, as it was still early morning, would perhaps take a cup of coffee; Rosenschön said that a Nun never spurned such things. The coffee was brought, but however hard Prosper tried to pour it out, the cups remained empty, notwithstanding that coffee streamed out of the pot.

“Well, well,” smiled Prosper Alpanus, “this is naughty coffee! – Would you, my dear Fräulein, be so good as to pour the coffee yourself?”

“With pleasure,” replied the Fräulein, grasping the pot. But despite the fact that not a single drop poured out of the pot, the cup became fuller and fuller, and the coffee flowed over on to the table, on to the Nun’s dress. She quickly put the pot down; the coffee immediately disappeared without a trace. Both Prosper Alpanus and the Nun now looked at each other for a while in silence, with strange expressions.

“You were,” the lady now began, “you were certainly, Herr Doctor, occupied with a very attractive book when I entered.”

“Indeed,” replied the Doctor, “this book contains extremely curious things.”

And he tried to open the little book in a gilt case, which lay before him on the table. But all his efforts were in vain, for with a loud clip, clap

the book always snapped itself shut. “Well, well,” said Prosper Alpanus, “perhaps *you* could have a go with this stubborn thing, my worthy Fräulein!”

He handed the lady the book, which opened of its own accord as soon as she touched it. But all the pages came loose and stretched out into a giant folio and rustled around the room.

The Fräulein started back. Now the Doctor forced the book shut, and all the pages disappeared.

“But,” said Prosper Alpanus with a soft smile, rising from his seat, “but my dear Fräulein, why are we wasting our time on such contemptible table-tricks; for ordinary table-tricks, and nothing else, are what we have been doing up to now, let us rather proceed to higher things.”

“I want to leave!” cried the Fräulein, rising from her seat.

“Oh,” said Prosper Alpanus, “yet that would probably not be entirely possible without my consent; for, my dear lady, I must just tell you that you are now completely in my power.”

“In your power,” cried the Fräulein, angrily, “in your power, Doctor? – Foolish conceit!”

And with these words her silk dress spread itself out, and she floated up to the ceiling as the loveliest Camberwell beauty. But at once Prosper Alpanus was buzzing and rushing after her as a huge stag-beetle. Totally exhausted, the Camberwell beauty fluttered down and ran around the ground as a little mouse. But the stag-beetle sprang after it, miaowing and snorting, as a grey tomcat. The little mouse rose once again as a dazzling hummingbird, when all sorts of strange voices were raised all around the country house, and all sorts of wonderful insects buzzed in, along with strange wood-fowl, and a golden web was spun over the window. Then all at once the Fairy Rosabelverde, radiant in all her splendour and eminence, in a glistening white garment fastened by a sparkling belt of diamonds, white

and red roses woven in her dark locks, stood there in the middle of the room. Before her the magus in a gold-embroidered robe, a glittering crown on his head, the cane with the fiery-beaming knob in his hand.

As Rosabelverde strode up to the magus, a golden comb fell out of her hair and shattered, as if it were made of glass, on the marble floor.

“Oh my! – Oh my!” cried the Fairy.

Suddenly Sister von Rosenschön was sitting once more in a long black dress at the coffee table, and opposite her sat Doctor Prosper Alpanus.

“I would think,” said Prosper Alpanus very calmly, pouring the most splendid steaming mocha coffee into the Chinese cups without difficulty, “I would think, my dear Fräulein, that we both now sufficiently know where we stand with each other. – I am very sorry that your beautiful comb shattered on my hard floor.”

“Only my clumsiness,” replied the Fräulein, slurping her coffee with relish, “was to blame for that. One must take care not to drop anything on *this* floor, for if I am not mistaken, these stones are written over with the most wonderful hieroglyphs, which may seem to many people to be only ordinary marble veins.”

“Worn-out talismans, dear lady,” said Prosper Alpanus, “these stones are worn-out talismans, nothing more.”

“But dear Doctor,” cried the Fräulein, “how is it possible that we have not known each other since the earliest age, that our paths did not cross a single time?”

“Diverse education, dear lady,” replied Prosper Alpanus, “diverse education is simply to blame! While you, the most promising maiden in Jinnistan, could give free rein to your rich nature, your happy genius, I, a miserable student, was shut up in the pyramids hearing lectures by Professor Zoroaster, an old grumbler but one who knew a hell of a lot. Under the

government of the worthy Fürst Demetrius I took up residence in this pleasant little land.”

“What,” said the Fräulein, “and were not expelled when Prince Paphnutius established Enlightenment?”

“Not at all,” answered Prosper, “rather, I was successful in completely disguising my true self by striving, as regarded matters of Enlightenment, to demonstrate a quite exceptional knowledge in all sorts of leaflets I distributed. I proved that it could never thunder and lightning without the Fürst’s consent, and that we owe lovely weather and a good harvest solely to his and his noblesse’s efforts, who had discussed these matters very wisely in the inner chambers while outside the common folk were ploughing and sowing the fields. At that time the Fürst elevated me to ‘Privy Supreme President of Enlightenment’, a position I threw off with my disguise like a tiresome burden, once the storm was over.

“In secret I was as useful as I could be. That is to say, what we, you and I, my dear lady, truly call useful. – Do you perhaps know, my dear Fräulein, that it was I who warned you about the Enlightenment Police breaking in? – That it is I to whom you owe the continued possession of the handy little things you showed me earlier? – Oh my God! Dear Sister, just look out these windows! – Don’t you recognise this park any more, in which you would stroll so often and speak with the friendly spirits inhabiting the bushes – flowers – springs? I have saved this park through my science. It is still there as in the time of old Demetrius. Fürst Barsanuph troubles himself, Heaven be thanked, little with magical beings; he is an affable lord and doesn’t stop anyone from performing magic as much as they please, as long as no one sees them doing it and they pay the correct taxes. So I live here like you, dear lady, in your convent, happy and free from care!”

“Doctor,” cried the Fräulein, the tears gushing from her eyes, “Doctor, what are you saying! – What enlightenments! – Yes, I recognise this grove, where I enjoyed the most blissful pleasures! – Doctor! – Noblest of men, to whom I owe so much! - And you can persecute my little protégé so cruelly?”

“You have,” replied the Doctor, “you have, my dear lady, carried away by your innate good-nature, squandered your gifts on one unworthy of them. Zinnober is and will remain, despite your generous help, a misshapen little rascal, who now, the golden comb having shattered, is entirely in my hands.”

“Have compassion, oh Doctor!” pleaded the Fräulein.

“But kindly take a look at this,” said Prosper, holding out to the Fräulein the horoscope for Balthasar that he had cast.

The Fräulein looked in it and cried out, filled with grief: “Yes! – If that’s the way it is, then I have to yield to the higher power – Poor Zinnober!”

“Admit, dear lady,” said the Doctor with a smile, “admit that women often take great pleasure in the most bizarre things, following the idea born in a moment restlessly and recklessly and ignoring every painful touch of any other circumstance! – Zinnober must serve his fate, but even *then* he will attain to undeserved honour. With this I pay homage to your power, your goodness, your virtue, my dear, gracious Fräulein!”

“Splendid, excellent man,” cried the Fräulein, “let us remain friends!”

“Forever,” replied the Doctor. “My friendship, my inner affection for you, sweet fairy, will never cease. Don’t hesitate to turn to me on all of life’s serious occasions and – oh come and drink coffee with me as often as the idea enters your mind.”

“Farewell, my worthy magus, I shall never forget your favour, never forget this coffee!”

Thus spoke the Fräulein and, overcome with inner emotion, she stood up to take her leave.

Prosper Alpanus accompanied her to the gate, while all the wonderful voices of the forest rang out in the most delightful way.

Before the gate there stood, instead of the Fräulein’s carriage, the Doctor’s crystal mussel with the unicorns harnessed, behind which the rose-beetle was spreading out its glittering wings. The silver pheasant sat on the box seat and, holding the golden reins in its beak, looked at the Fräulein with intelligent eyes.

The Nun felt herself transported into the most blissful time of her most marvellous fairy-life as the carriage, making marvellous music, swept through the fragrant forest.

Chapter Seven

How Professor Mosch Terpin investigated Nature in the Princely Wine Cellar. – Mycetes Beelzebub. – Despair of the student Balthasar. – Advantageous influence of a well-furnished country house on domestic happiness. – How Prosper Alpanus handed Balthasar a tortoiseshell tin and rode away.

Balthasar, who remained hidden in Hoch-Jakobsheim village, received a letter from Referendarius Pulcher in Kerepes containing:

“Our affairs, my dear friend Balthasar, go from bad to worse. Our enemy, the abominable Zinnober, has become Minister of Foreign Affairs and has received the Order of the Green-Spotted Tiger with twenty buttons. He has worked his way up to become the Fürst’s favourite and pushes through everything he wants to. Professor Mosch Terpin is quite beside

himself, he puffs himself up in his stupid pride. Through the agency of his future son-in-law he has received the position of General Director of All Natural Affairs in the State, a position that brings him a lot of money and a host of other emoluments. In his capacity of General Director he censors and audits the eclipses of the sun and the moon as well as the weather forecasts in those calendars allowed in the State; and in particular he investigates Nature in the royal capital and the surrounding area. For the sake of this occupation he is sent from the princely woodlands the strangest fowl, the rarest beasts, which he, precisely to investigate their Nature, has roasted and gobble up.

“Likewise he is now writing (at least he pretends to be) a treatise on why wine tastes different from water and also expresses itself through different effects, which he intends to dedicate to his son-in-law. Zinnober has brought it about that Mosch Terpin, for the sake of the treatise, shall study in the princely wine cellar every day. He has already studied away half a hogshead of old Rhine wine as well as several dozen bottles of champagne and has now reached a barrel of Alicante. – The cellarer is wringing his hands! – In this way has the Professor, who as you know is the biggest guzzler on Earth, been served; and he would be leading the cushiest life in the world if he didn’t often have to suddenly travel around the land, when a hailstorm has devastated the fields, to explain to the princely tenantry why it hailed, so that the stupid devils receive a bit of knowledge, can be on their guard against such things in the future, and cannot keep demanding a remission of their rent on account of a matter for which no one is to blame but they themselves.

“The Minister cannot get over the thrashing you gave him. He has sworn vengeance on you. You will not be able to show your face in Kerepes

any more. He is also vigorously persecuting me, because I have spied on his mysterious way of having his hair done by a winged lady.

“As long as Zinnober remains the Prince’s favourite, there is no chance of my being able to lay claim to any respectable post. My unlucky star will have it that I always run into the freak when I am totally unsuspecting, and in a way that is invariably embarrassing for me. Recently the Minister was in the Zoological Cabinet in full state, with épée, star and ribbon, and had positioned himself, after his usual fashion – propped on his cane, hovering on his tiptoes – beside the glass cabinet containing the rarest American apes. Some strangers who were looking at the cabinet walked up, and one of them, catching sight of the little mandrake, loudly exclaims:

“‘Oh! – What a delightful ape! – What a cute animal! – The ornament of the whole cabinet! – Oh, what is the pretty little ape called? From what land?’

“Then the cabinet attendant says, in all seriousness, touching Zinnober’s shoulder: ‘Yes, a quite beautiful specimen, a splendid Brazilian, the so-called Mycetes Beelzebub – *Simia Beelzebub Linnei – niger, barbatus, podiis caudaque apice brunneis*¹⁸ – howling monkey’ –

“‘Sir,’ the little one now snorts at the attendant, ‘Sir, I believe you are mad or have completely taken leave of your senses, I’m no Beelzebub caudaque – no howling monkey, I am Zinnober, Minister Zinnober, Knight of the Green-Spotted Tiger with twenty buttons!’ I am standing not far away and break out – if it had cost me my life on the spot, I could not restrain myself – into a braying laughter.

“‘You here too, Herr Referendarius?’ he rasps at me, a red glow sparkling from his sorcerer’s eyes.

“God knows how it came about that the strangers continued to take him for the most beautiful, rarest ape they had ever seen, and insisted on

feeding him the filberts they had taken out of their pockets. Now Zinnober became so furious that he vainly gasped for breath and his little legs failed him. The valet who was summoned had to take him onto his arm and carry him down to his carriage.

“I myself cannot understand why this event gives a glimmer of hope. It is the first vexation that the bewitched little absurdity has experienced.

“So much is certain, that Zinnober recently came out of his garden in the early morning looking very disturbed. The winged woman must have failed to turn up, for the beautiful curls are no more. Apparently, his hair hangs down scruffily on his back and Fürst Barsanuph has said to him: ‘Do not neglect your toilet so, dear Minister, I shall send you my hairdresser!’ – whereupon Zinnober very politely exclaimed that he would have the bugger flung out of the window when he arrived.

“‘Great soul! There’s no getting the better of you!’ the Fürst then said, crying profusely!

“Farewell, dearest Balthasar! Don’t give up all hope, and keep yourself well-hidden, so they don’t catch you!” –

In total despair at what his friend had written him, Balthasar ran into the depths of the forest and broke out into loud laments:

“I should hope,” he cried, “I should still hope, when all hope has disappeared, when all stars have set and dismal – dismal night envelopes my wretched self? – Unhappy Fate! – I am succumbing to the dark power that has entered my life, bringing disaster! – Madness to hope for deliverance by Prosper Alpanus, by this Prosper Alpanus who enticed me with infernal arts and then drove me out of Kerepes by making the thrashing I gave the mirror image rain down on Zinnober’s actual back! – Oh Candida! – If I could only forget the Heavenly Child! – But the spark of love is glowing in me more strongly, more powerfully than ever! – I see the fair form of my beloved

everywhere, who with a sweet smile is stretching out her longing arms towards me! – I *know* it! – You love me, fair sweet Candida, and not being able to save you from the terrible bewitchment that has you in its snares – *that* is the hopeless pain that is killing me! – Treacherous Prosper! What did I do to you, for you to so cruelly make a fool of me!” –

Deep twilight had fallen; all the colours of the forest faded away into a dull grey. Then it was as if a special lustre, like light flaring up in the evening, was shining through the trees and the bushes, and a thousand small insects rose humming into the air with the swish of beating wings. Radiant rose-beetles swept back and forth, and colourfully decorated butterflies fluttered in amongst them, sprinkling fragrant pollen all around. The mumbling and humming became soft, sweetly whispering music, which settled soothing on Balthasar’s shattered heart. Above him the gleam sparkled in brighter rays. He looked up and, to his astonishment, saw Prosper Alpanus hovering towards him on a wonderful insect not dissimilar to a dragonfly resplendent in the most gorgeous colours.

Prosper Alpanus descended and sat down beside the youth, while the dragonfly flew up into the bushes and joined in the song that was sounding through the whole forest.

He touched the youth’s brow with the marvellously glistening flowers he carried in his hand, and at once fresh courage, fresh life was kindled in Balthasar’s breast.

“You do me,” now said Prosper Alpanus in a gentle voice, “you do me a great injustice, my dear Balthasar, when you call me cruel and treacherous at that very moment when I have succeeded in mastering the magic that is upsetting your life; when I, the sooner to find you, to comfort you, jump onto my colourful, favourite little steed and ride here, provided with everything that can serve to your salvation.

“Yet nothing is more bitter than the pangs of love, there is nothing like the impatience of a heart despairing with love and longing. – I forgive you, for I myself was in no better a state when I, around two thousand years ago, was in love with an Indian Princess called Balsamine; and in my desperation I pulled out the sorcerer Lothos’ beard, who was my best friend, and that is why I, as you see, do not have one myself, so that nothing of the kind can happen to me.

“But to tell you all of this at length would certainly be most out of place here, as every lover only wishes to hear about *his* love, who he thinks is alone worth talking about, just as every poet only likes hearing *his* verses. So to the point!

“Know then that Zinnober is a poor peasant woman’s abandoned freak and is actually called Little Zaches. He has only adopted the proud name Zinnober out of vanity. The Sister von Rosenschön – or rather the famous Fairy Rosabelverde, for that lady is no other – found the little monster by the roadside. She believed she could replace everything that Nature had, like a step-mother, denied the little one, by bestowing on him the strange, mysterious gift by dint of which everything of merit that anyone else may think, speak or do in his presence will redound to *his* credit; indeed that when in the society of cultured, sensible and intelligent persons he will be respected as cultured, sensible and intelligent and must on every single occasion be regarded as the most complete model of the kind he clashes against.

“This peculiar magic lies in three shining, fiery-coloured hairs that stretch over the little one’s parting. The slightest touch to these hairs, or for that matter to his head, must be painful, indeed disastrous, for him. For that reason the fairy made his naturally thin, unkempt hair surge down in thick, lovely curls that, protecting the little one’s head, at the same time hid the red

stripe and strengthened the spell. Every ninth day the fairy herself combed the little one's hair with a magic golden comb, and this combing destroyed every venture aimed at destroying the spell. But a powerful talisman, that I was able to push underneath the good fairy when she visited me, destroyed the comb itself.

"It is now only a question of tearing out those three fiery-coloured hairs, and he will sink back into the nonentity he used to be! – The breaking of this spell, my dear Balthasar, has been reserved for *you*. You have strength, skill and courage; you will perform this task in the proper way. Take this small, polished glass; when you find little Zinnober, approach him, focus your gaze sharply on his head through this glass, the three red hairs will clearly and openly stretch over the little one's head. Seize him with a firm grip, pay no attention to the piercing caterwauling he'll strike up, tear the three hairs out in one fell swoop and burn them on the spot. It is necessary that the hairs are torn out with *one* tug and burnt *immediately*, for otherwise they could still cause all kinds of pernicious effects. So direct your most particular attention to firmly and properly seizing the hairs and pouncing on the little one precisely when there's a fire or a light located nearby."

"Oh Prosper Alpanus," cried Balthasar, "how ill I have deserved this goodness, this magnanimity with my mistrust! – How I feel deep within my breast, that my suffering is now coming to an end, that all the bliss in Heaven is opening out the golden gates to me!"

"I love," continued Prosper Alpanus, "I love youths who, just like you, my Balthasar, carry longing and love in a pure heart, in whose breasts there still echoes those marvellous chords that belong to the distant land of divine wonders that is my homeland. The fortunate people, gifted with this inner music, are the only ones to whom one can give the name of poet; although

many are so called who pick up the first double bass they see, stroke around here and there and take the confused rattling of the strings groaning beneath their fingers for marvellous music sounding out from their inner selves.

“You feel, I know, my dear Balthasar, you occasionally feel as if you understood the murmuring springs, the rustling trees, yes, as if the flaring sunset was speaking to you in comprehensible words! – Yes, my Balthasar! – In these moments you truly understand the wonderful voices of Nature, for the divine sound, kindled by the marvellous harmony of the deepest essence of Nature, rises from your own heart. – As you play the piano, oh Poet, so you will know that after a note is struck the notes related to it go on sounding. – This natural law serves as more than a stale allegory! Yes, oh Poet, you are a much better one than many believe, to whom you have read out your attempts to bring your inner music to paper with pen and ink. These attempts are nothing to write home about. But you have been very successful in the historical style, when you wrote down, with a pragmatic breadth and precision, the nightingale’s love for the crimson rose, which took place before my eyes. – That is a really charming work.”

Prosper Alpanus paused; Balthasar looked at him wide-eyed in amazement, he hadn’t a clue what he should say to Prosper’s declaration that the poem he held to be the most incredible he had ever written was an attempt at history.

“You may well,” continued Prosper Alpanus, a pleasant smile illuminating his face, “you may well be amazed at my words, there may be much about *me* in general that seems strange to you. But consider that I, after the judgement of all rational people, am a person who can only appear in Fairy Tales; and you know, dear Balthasar, that such persons can behave in a wondrous way and blether mad nonsense, as much as they please,

especially when there yet lies something behind all of this that cannot exactly be dismissed.

“But to get on with it! – If the Fairy Rosabelverde adopted misshapen Zinnober so zealously, then you, my Balthasar, are now really and truly my dear protégé. So listen to what I’ve thought of doing for you!

“The sorcerer Lothos visited me yesterday; he brought me a thousand greetings, but also a thousand laments from Princess Balsamine, who has awoken from sleep and, to the sweet sounds of the Schastra Bhade¹⁹, that marvellous poem that was our first love, is reaching out her longing arms towards me. And my old friend, Minister Yuchi²⁰, is giving me a friendly wave from the Pole Star. – I must away to farthest India!

“My estate, which I am leaving, I wish to see in no other possession than yours. Tomorrow I am going to Kerepes to have a formal deed of gift drawn up, in which I will appear as your uncle. Once Zinnober’s spell is broken, you walk up to Professor Mosch Terpin as the owner of an excellent estate and a considerable fortune; and when you ask for the beautiful Candida’s hand, he will delightedly grant you everything. But there’s more!

“When you move into my country house with your Candida, then you can rest assured of a happy marriage. Behind the beautiful trees there grows everything the house needs – apart from the most marvellous fruits, the most beautiful cabbage and huge, tasty vegetables in general, as can’t be found for miles around. Your wife will always have the best salad, the best asparagus. The kitchen is so equipped that the pans never boil over and no dish will go off, even if you should be a whole hour late for your meal. Curtains, chair- and sofa-coverings are so composed that it will be impossible, no matter how clumsy the servants, to stain them; likewise no porcelain, no glass will shatter, even if the servants should take the greatest pains to do so and throw it against the hardest floor. Finally, every time your wife has the washing

done, there will be the clearest, most beautiful weather above the large lawn behind the house, even if it should be raining, thundering and lightning all around. In short, my Balthasar, all has been taken care of so that you may enjoy domestic bliss by the side of your fair Candida in uninterrupted peace!

“But now I think it is time for me to return home and begin, with my friend Lothos, the preparations for my approaching departure. Farewell, my Balthasar!”

And Prosper whistled once – twice to the dragonfly, which straightway flew over, humming. He bridled it and leapt into the saddle. But, already in mid-air, he suddenly stopped and turned to Balthasar.

“I had almost,” he said, “forgotten your friend Fabian. Attacked by a roguish mood, I punished him too severely for his impudence. This tin contains what will comfort him!”

Prosper handed Balthasar a small, brightly polished tortoiseshell tin, which he put in his pocket with the small lorgnette he had been given by Prosper to break Zinnober’s spell.

Now Prosper Alpanus rustled away through the bushes, while the voices in the forest rang out more powerfully, more gracefully.

Balthasar returned to Hoch-Jakobsheim with all the joy, all the delight of the sweetest hope in his heart.

Chapter Eight

How Fabian was taken for a sectarian and rabble-rouser because of his long coattails. – How Fürst Barsanuph stepped behind the fire-screen and cashiered the General Director of Natural Affairs. – Zinnober’s flight from Mosch Terpin’s house. – How Mosch Terpin wanted to go for a ride on a butterfly and become Kaiser, but then went to bed.

In the first light of dawn, when the roads and paths were still deserted, Balthasar crept into Kerepes and ran at once to his friend Fabian. When he knocked on the room door, a weak, sickly voice cried: "Come in!"

Pale – contorted, with hopeless pain on his countenance, Fabian lay on his bed.

"In the name of Heaven!" cried Balthasar, "in the name of Heaven – friend! Speak! – What has happened to you?"

"Oh friend," said Fabian in a broken voice, sitting up straight with an effort. "It's over with me, all over. The damned sorcerer's trick that, I know it, vindictive Prosper Alpanus is playing on me, is plunging me to my doom!"

"How is that possible?" asked Balthasar; "magic, sorcerer's trick, you never used to believe in such things."

"Oh," continued Fabian in a whining voice, "oh, now I believe in everything, in sorcerers and witches and earth-spirits and water-spirits, in King Rat and Mister Mandrake – in anything you want. When the thing grabs you by the throat as it has grabbed me, you'll give in all right! – You remember the infernal to-do with my coat, when we came from Prosper Alpanus's! – Yes! If only it had remained at that! – Just have a little look around my room, dear Balthasar!"

Balthasar did so and perceived, all around on the walls, a host of tailcoats, overcoats and kurthas of every possible cut, of every possible colour.

"What," he cried, "are you going to open up a clothes shop, Fabian?"

"Don't mock," replied Fabian, "don't mock, dear friend. I had all of these clothes made by the most renowned tailors, always hoping to finally escape the unhappy damnation that rests on my coats – but in vain. As soon as I wear the neatest coat, that fits me to a T, for just a few minutes, the

sleeves slide up to my shoulders and the tails wag after me six ells long. In despair I had that Spencer with the world-long Pierrot-sleeves made: ‘Just slide, sleeves,’ I thought, ‘just stretch yourself out, tails, then everything will be in the right proportion.’ But! – After a few minutes exactly the same thing has happened as with all other coats! All the art and energies of the mightiest tailors could achieve nothing against the confounded spell! That I was mocked, derided wherever I showed my face, goes without saying; but the persistence – not of my own choice – with which I appeared in such a damned coat again and again soon gave rise to quite different judgements. The least of them was women calling me immensely vain and fatuous, because I wanted, at all costs and against all decency, to be seen with bare arms, presumably thinking they were very attractive. But the theologians were soon proclaiming me to be a sectarian, disputing among themselves only whether I should be classed with the Sect of the Sleevians or the Tailsians; but they agreed that both sects were to be named extremely dangerous, as both tolerated complete freedom of the will and had the audacity to think what they wanted to. Diplomats took me for a base agitator. They claimed that I intended, by means of my long coattails, to excite dissatisfaction among the masses and make them rebellious towards the government; I actually belonged to a secret association, whose symbol is a short sleeve. For some time now there had been found traces of the Short-Sleevers, who were to be feared as much as the Jesuits, indeed even more, as they strove to establish poetry – harmful to every state – everywhere, and doubted the infallibility of the Fürst. In short! – The thing became more and more serious, until the Vice-Chancellor summoned me. I foresaw my misfortune if I put on a coat, and so appeared in my waistcoat. The man was angry with this; he thought I meant to mock him, and laid into me, I would

appear before him in a sensible, respectable coat within eight days, failing which he would without any mercy pronounce my expulsion.

“Today the period runs out! – Oh, unhappy me! – Oh, damned Prosper Alpanus!”

“Stop,” cried Balthasar, “stop, dear friend Fabian, don’t abuse my dear, cherished uncle, who has presented me with an estate. And he doesn’t really mean any harm towards *you*, notwithstanding that he, I must admit, has punished too severely the impudence with which you treated him. – But I bring help! – He sends you this little tin, which will put an end to all your troubles.”

And Balthasar pulled the small tortoiseshell tin he had received from Prosper Alpanus out of his pocket and handed it to the inconsolable Fabian.

“And how,” said the latter, “how will this stupid rubbish help me? How can a small tortoiseshell tin have any influence on the shape of my coats?”

“I don’t know how,” replied Balthasar, “but my dear uncle could not and would not deceive me, I have the most complete confidence in him; so just open the tin, dear Fabian, and let’s have a look at what it contains.”

Fabian did so – and from the tin there billowed forth a marvellously made black tailcoat of the finest fabric. Both Fabian and Balthasar could not refrain from crying out loud in the utmost astonishment.

“Ha, I understand you!” cried Balthasar with enthusiasm, “ha, I understand you, my Prosper, my dear uncle! This coat will fit, will cancel all the magic.”

Without more ado Fabian put the jacket on, and what Balthasar had suspected really did come to pass. The beautiful jacket fitted Fabian as no jacket had ever fitted him before; and there was no question of sliding sleeves or lengthening tails.

Totally beside himself with joy, Fabian now decided to run to the Vice-Chancellor at once in his new, well-fitting coat and bring matters back on an even keel.

Balthasar now told his friend in detail about everything that had happened with Prosper Alpanus and how the latter had placed in his hands the means of bringing to an end the terrible trouble the misshapen hop-o'-my-thumb had caused. Fabian, who had become a new person, now that all scepticism had left him, extolled Prosper's noble magnanimity excessively and offered to lend a helping hand to break Zinnober's spell. At that moment Balthasar saw from the window his friend, Referendarius Pulcher, about to gloomily drag himself around the corner.

At Balthasar's behest Fabian stuck his head out the window and waved and shouted to the Referendarius to come up at once.

On entering Pulcher immediately cried: "What a marvellous coat you're wearing, dear Fabian!"

But the latter said that Balthasar would explain everything to him, and ran off to the Vice-Chancellor.

Now when Balthasar had told the Referendarius what had taken place in great detail, the latter said: "Now is the time to do away with the abominable monster. You must know that he is celebrating his betrothal to Candida today, that Mosch Terpin, in his vanity, is giving a great reception, to which he has even invited the Fürst. We'll force our way into the Professor's house during this reception and attack the little one. There'll be no lack of lights in the room to burn the hostile hairs immediately."

The friends had spoken and arranged a great deal more, when Fabian walked in, his face beaming with joy.

"The power," he said, "the power of the coat that billowed out of the tortoiseshell tin proved itself marvellously. As soon as I appeared before the

Vice-Chancellor, he gave a satisfied smile. ‘Ha,’ he said to me, ‘ha! – I perceive, my dear Fabian, that you have returned to us from your strange aberration! – Well! Fireballs like you easily let themselves be carried away to extremes! – I never took your behaviour for religious enthusiasm – more of a misunderstood patriotism – tendency towards the extraordinary, based on the example of the heroes of antiquity. – Yes, I’ll accept that, such a beautiful, well-fitting coat! – Blessed is the State, blessed the world, when big-hearted youths wear such coats, with such fitting sleeves and tails. Stay loyal, Fabian, stay loyal to such virtue, to such an upright spirit, from these springs forth the greatness of a true hero!’

“The Vice-Chancellor embraced me, his eyes filling with shining tears. I myself don’t know how I came to pull out the small tortoiseshell tin, from which my coat had arisen, and which I had put in my pocket. ‘Please!’ said the Vice-Chancellor, pinching together his thumb and index-finger. Without knowing if there really was any tobacco inside, I opened the tin. The Vice-Chancellor reached inside, took snuff, grabbed my hand, squeezed it hard, there were tears running down over his cheeks; deeply moved, he said: ‘Noble youth! – An excellent pinch! – All is forgiven and forgotten, dine with me at midday!’

“You see, friends, all of my suffering has come to an end; and if we succeed today, as is not to be expected otherwise, in breaking Zinnober’s spell, then *you* too will be happy henceforth!” - - -

In the hall lit by a hundred candles, little Zinnober stood in a scarlet embroidered suit, draped in the large ribbon of the Gold-Spotted Tiger with twenty buttons, épée at his side, plumed hat under his arm. Beside him the fair Candida, in bridal array, radiant with beauty and youth. Zinnober had grasped her hand, which he pressed to his mouth from time to time, while

grinning and smiling very unpleasantly. And every time a deeper red flitted across Candida's cheeks and she looked at the little one with the expression of the most heartfelt love. Now that was really horrible to see, and only the blindness brought upon everyone by Zinnober's spell was to blame for no one being so incensed at Candida's terrible entanglement that they seized the little witch's imp and threw him onto the open fire.

The society had assembled in a circle around the pair, at a respectful distance. Fürst Barsanuph alone stood beside Candida and endeavoured to throw around meaningful, gracious glances, to which, however, no one paid any special attention. All had eyes only for the engaged couple, and they hung on Zinnober's every word, as he every now and then purred several incomprehensible sounds which were followed, every time, by a soft Ah! of the greatest admiration, expressed by the company.

It was time for the engagement rings to be exchanged. Mosch Terpin entered the circle with a salver, on which the rings were glittering. He cleared his throat. – Zinnober stood up on his tiptoes as high as he possibly could, almost reaching the bride-to-be's elbow. – Everyone was standing in the most eager anticipation – then suddenly strange voices are heard, the hall-door bursts open, Balthasar forces his way in, with him Pulcher – Fabian! – They break through the circle – “What's this, what do the strangers want?” everyone shouts all at once.

Horrified, Fürst Barsanuph screams: “Revolt – rebellion – guards!” and runs behind the fire-screen. – Mosch Terpin recognises Balthasar, who has pressed forward close to Zinnober, and cries: “Herr Studiosus! – Are you mad – Are you off your head? – How can you have the audacity to break in here during the betrothal? – People – company – servants, throw the boor out the door!”

But without taking the least notice of anything else, Balthasar has already pulled out Prosper's lorgnette and, looking through it, fixes a steady gaze on Zinnober's head. As if struck by an electric ray, Zinnober gives a piercing yowl that sets the whole hall reverberating. Candida swoons onto a chair; the tightly-knit company circle scatters. – The glowing, flame-coloured stripe of hair lies clearly before Balthasar's eyes, he runs at Zinnober – grabs him, he thrashes his little legs around and struggles and scratches and bites.

“Seize him – seize him!” cries Balthasar; then Fabian and Pulcher grip the little one so that he can neither stir nor demur, and Balthasar firmly and cautiously takes hold of the red hairs, tears them down off his head in one go, runs to the fireplace, throws them into the fire, they crackle loudly, there is a deafening clap, everyone awakes as from a dream. –

There stands little Zinnober, having laboriously picked himself up off the ground, and he swears and curses and orders the brazen disturbers of the peace, who had laid hands on the sacred person of the First Minister of the State, to be immediately seized and thrown into the deepest dungeon! But the company asks one another: “And where has this somersaulting little chap suddenly come from? – What is the little monster after?”

And because the hop-o'-my-thumb rages and stamps the floor with his little feet all the time and keeps yelling out: “I'm Minister Zinnober – I'm Minister Zinnober – the Green-Spotted Tiger with 20 buttons!” everyone breaks out into wild laughter. The little one is surrounded, the men lift him up and throw him to one another like a ball; one button after another pops off his ribbon – he loses his hat – his épée, his shoes. – Fürst Barsanuph steps out from behind the fire-screen and walks into the middle of the commotion. The little one screeches: “Fürst Barsanuph – Highness – save your Minister – your favourite! – Help – Help – the State is in danger – the

Green-Spotted Tiger – Oh – Oh!” – The Fürst throws a furious glance at the little one and strides rapidly towards the door. Mosch Terpins steps before him, the Fürst grabs him, drags him into a corner and says, his eyes flashing with rage:

“You had the audacity to act out a stupid farce here before your Fürst, the Father of the People? – You invite me to the betrothal of your daughter to my worthy Minister Zinnober, and instead of my Minister I find here a hideous freak, whom you have dressed in glittering clothes? – Sir, know you this: that is a treasonable prank, which I would punish severely, if you weren’t an utterly foolish man who belongs in the madhouse. – I relieve you of the Office of General Director of Natural Affairs and prohibit all further study in my cellar! – Adieu!”

And he stormed off.

But Mosch Terpin rushed, quivering with rage, at the little one, grabbed him by his long, unkempt hair and ran him towards the window. “Down you go,” he screamed, “down you go, disgraceful, frightful freak, who deceived me so ignominiously, who has done me out of all life’s happiness!”

He was going to hurl the little one out of the open window, but the attendant to the Zoological Cabinet, who was also present, rushed over at the speed of lightning, grabbed hold of the little one and tore him free from Mosch Terpin’s grip.

“Stop,” said the attendant, “stop, Professor, do not lay your hands on princely property. It is no freak, it is the Mycetes Beelzebub, Simia Beelzebub, who has escaped from the museum.”

“Simia Beelzebub – Simia Beelzebub!” rang out from all sides along with roaring laughter. Yet the attendant had hardly taken the little one onto his arm and had a close look at him, when he cried out in displeasure:

“What’s this I see! – *This* isn’t Simia Beelzebub, this is a despicable, ugly mandrake! Ugh! – Ugh!”

And he threw the little one into the middle of the hall. To the loud, sneering laughter of the company the little one ran squealing and growling out through the doors – down the steps, away to his house, without a single one of his servants noticing him.

While all this was taking place in the hall, Balthasar had retreated into the cabinet to which, as he had observed, the unconscious Candida had been brought. He threw himself at her feet, pressed her hands to his lips, called her the sweetest names. At last she awoke with a deep sigh, and when she caught sight of Balthasar, she cried out in delight: “You’re finally – finally there, my dear Balthasar! Oh, I’ve almost *died* from longing and the pain of love! – And I keep hearing the nightingale’s music, which is moving the crimson rose to pour out its life-blood!”

Now she, forgetting everything, everything around her, told how an evil, hideous dream had wrapped itself around her, how it had seemed to her that an ugly fiend had attached itself to her heart, to whom she had to give her love, because she could not do otherwise. The fiend had known how to disguise himself to look like Balthasar; and when she thought really vividly of Balthasar, she knew that the fiend was not Balthasar, but she then felt, again in an incomprehensible way, as if she must love the fiend, just for Balthasar’s sake.

Balthasar enlightened her as far as was possible without totally befuddling her already flustered mind. Then there followed – and it does not tend to happen otherwise with lovers – a thousand assurances, a thousand oaths of eternal love and fidelity. And all this while they embraced one another and pressed one another to their hearts with the fervour of the

deepest tenderness and were utterly immersed in all the bliss, in all the delight of the highest Heaven.

Mosch Terpin walked in, wringing his hands and moaning; with him came Pulcher and Fabian, who were incessantly, but vainly, speaking soothing words.

“No,” cried Mosch Terpin, “no, I am a totally broken man! – No longer General Director of Natural Affairs in the State. – No more study in the princely cellar – the Fürst’s disfavour – I thought of becoming a Knight of the Green-Spotted Tiger, with five buttons at the least. – All gone! – Just what will Hs. Excellency the worthy Minister Zinnober say when he hears that I took a despicable freak, the Simia Beelzebub cauda prehensili, or whatever it may be, for him! – Oh God, his hatred too will fall on me! – Alicante! – Alicante!”

“But, dear Professor,” the friends consoled, “honourable General Director, just consider that there no longer is any Minister Zinnober! – You weren’t totally mistaken, the deformed squirt has, by means of the magical gift he received from the Fairy Rosabelverde, deceived you just as he did all of us!”

Now Balthasar recounted all that had happened, from the beginning. The Professor listened and listened, until Balthasar had finished, then he cried: “Am I awake! – Am I dreaming – witches – sorcerers – fairies – magic mirrors – attractions – am I to believe in this nonsense?”

“Oh, my dearest Herr Professor,” Fabian broke in, “if you’d only worn a coat with short sleeves and a long train for a while as I did, you’d soon believe in everything all right, that it would be a joy to behold!”

“Yes,” cried Mosch Terpin, “yes, that’s how everything is – yes! – A bewitched monster has deceived me – I’m not standing on my feet any more – I’m floating up to the ceiling – Prosper Alpanus is fetching me – I’m

riding out on a butterfly – I’m having my hair done by the Fairy Rosabelverde – by the Sister Rosenschön, and I’m becoming Minister! – King! – Kaiser!”

And he leapt around the room and shouted and shrieked with delight, so that everyone feared for his sanity; until he sank down, completely exhausted, into an easy-chair. Then Candida and Balthasar approached him. They spoke of how they loved one another so deeply, so more than anything, how they could not possibly live without one another, and it made very melancholic listening; for which reason Mosch Terpin did indeed cry a little.

“Everything,” he said, sobbing, “everything you want, children! – Marry one another, love one another – starve together, for I’m not giving a groschen away with Candida.”

As concerned starving, Balthasar said with a smile, he hoped to convince the Herr Professor tomorrow that there could never be any question of that, as his uncle Prosper Alpanus had adequately provided for him.

“Do that,” said the Professor weakly, “do that, my dear son, if you can, and tomorrow at that; for if I’m not to fall into madness, if my head isn’t to burst asunder, then I must go to bed at once!”

Which he did on the spot.

Chapter Nine

Embarrassment of a loyal valet. – How old Liese instigated a rebellion and Minister Zinnober slipped while fleeing. – The curious manner in which the Fürst’s Personal Physician explained Zinnober’s sudden death. – How Fürst Barsanuph grieved, ate onions, and how the loss of Zinnober remained irreplaceable.

Minister Zinnober’s carriage had stood before Mosch Terpin’s house for almost the whole night in vain. Time after time the chasseur was assured

that Hs. Excellency must have left the company a long time ago; but he said that, on the contrary, that was absolutely impossible, as Hs. Excellency would certainly *not* have run home through wind and rain. Now when at last all lights were extinguished and the doors bolted, the chasseur had to drive off with the empty carriage for the Minister's house, where he immediately woke the valet and asked if then in the name of Heaven and in what way the Minister had come home.

"Hs. Excellency," the valet whispered in the chasseur's ear, "Hs. Excellency did arrive yesterday, late at night, that is quite certain – is recumbent in bed, in slumber. – But! – Oh my good chasseur! – How – in what way! – I'll tell you everything – but lips sealed – I'm lost, if Hs. Excellency should discover it was me in the dark corridor! – I'll lose my position, because Hs. Excellency may be of a diminutive stature, but does have possession of an extraordinary amount of savagery; alternates easily, knows not himself in his rage, has only yesterday run through – and through – a contemptible mouse, that had dared to hop through Hs. Excellency's bedroom, with his shining épée. – Well, all right!"

"Now at dusk I slip on my coat, intending to softly sneak over to join a party of Trick-Track²¹ in a little wine-tavern, when something scuffles and shuffles against me on the stairs and passes in between my legs in the dark corridor and bumps along the ground and raises a piercing yowl and then grunts like – oh God! – chasseur! – please keep your trap shut, noble man, or I'm out! – come a little closer – and then grunts like Our Excellency tends to grunt when the cook has burnt his calf's legs or something else in the State isn't to his liking."

The valet had whispered these last words into the chasseur's ear with his hand held up beside his mouth. The chasseur started, pulled an anxious face and cried: "Is it possible!"

“Yes,” continued the valet, “it was undoubtedly Our Excellency that ran through my legs in the corridor. Now I could clearly hear the master scraping up the chairs in the rooms and opening the doors of each room for himself, one after the other, until he reached his bedroom. I didn’t dare follow, but an hour or so later I crept up to the bedroom door and listened. The dear Excellency was snoring in the exact same way that tends to happen when important things are in motion. – Chasseur! ‘There are more things in Heaven and on Earth, than are dreamt of in our philosophy’ – I once heard a melancholy Prince say that in the theatre, he was dressed all in black and was very afraid of a man covered with grey cardboard. – Chasseur! – Yesterday something or other astonishing happened that drove the Excellency home. The Fürst was at the Professor’s, perhaps he said this and that – some neat little reform – and so the Minister’s over here straightaway, runs out of the betrothal and begins to work for the good of the government. – I heard it in his snoring; important, decisive things are going to happen! – Oh chasseur – perhaps we will all, sooner or later, grow our pigtails again! – But, dear friend, let us go down and listen as loyal servants at the bedroom door, if Hs. Excellency is still peacefully recumbent in bed and composing his inner thoughts.”

Both the valet and the chasseur crept to the doors and listened. Zinnober was whirring and piping and whistling through the most wondrous tones. Both servants stood in silent reverence, and the valet said, with heartfelt emotion: “Oh, he’s a great man, our master the Minister!” - - -

At daybreak there arose a violent racket downstairs in the Minister’s house. An old peasant-woman, miserably dressed in her long-since-faded Sunday best, had forced her way into the house and importuned the porter to take her immediately to her sonny, to Little Zaches. The porter had given

her to understand that Hs. Excellency the Herr Minister von Zinnober, Knight of the Green-Spotted Tiger with twenty buttons, lived in the house and none of the servants bore the name of Little Zaches or was so called. But then the woman had shrieked with a wild glee that the Herr Minister Zinnober with twenty buttons, that *was* her dear sonny, Little Zaches. At the woman's shrieks, at the porter's thundering curses, everyone in the house had run to the spot and the din became more and more deafening. When the valet descended to scatter the people who were so outrageously disturbing Hs. Excellency's morning repose, that woman, whom everyone took to be insane, was thrown out of the house.

The woman now sat down on the stone steps of the house opposite and sobbed and lamented that the rough folk inside over there wouldn't let her see her darling sonny, Little Zaches, who had become Minister. A crowd gradually assembled around her, to whom she repeated over and over again that Minister Zinnober was none other than her son, whom she had called Little Zaches in his youth; so that in the end the people did not know whether they should take the woman to be crazy or indeed suspect that there really was something in this.

The woman did not take her eyes off Zinnober's window. Then all at once she let out a ringing laugh, clapped her hands together and shouted with clamorous joy:

“There he is – there he is, my heart’s manikin – my little goblin – Good morning, Little Zaches! – Good morning, Little Zaches!”

Everyone looked across, and when they caught sight of little Zinnober standing, in his embroidered scarlet suit, the ribbon of the Order of the Green-Spotted Tiger draped around him, at the window, which reached to the floor, so that all of his body was clearly visible through the large panes, they laughed excessively and hooted and yelled:

“Little Zaches – Little Zaches! Ha, just look at the smart little baboon – the fantastic freak – the mandrake – Little Zaches! Little Zaches!”

The porter, then all of Zinnober’s servants, ran out to see what it was that the crowd was laughing and cheering at so immoderately. But barely had they espied their master when they began to shriek even more boisterously than the crowd, with the wildest laughter: “Little Zaches – Little Zaches – mandrake – hop-o’-my-thumb – alraun!”

Only now did the Minister seem to realise that the wild to-do in the street was aimed at none other than he himself. He flung open the window, looked down with anger flashing in his eyes, screamed, raved, did strange leaps in his rage – threatened with guards – police – gaol and prison.

But the more the Excellency raged with fury, the more deafening became the commotion and the laughter, people began to throw stones – fruit – vegetables, or whatever they could get hold of – at the unfortunate Minister – he had to withdraw! –

“Heavens above,” cried the valet, horrified: “the hideous little monster was peeking out of *Our Excellency*’s window – What’s this? – How did the little witch’s imp get in the room?”

And he ran upstairs, but as before he found the Minister’s bed-cabinet firmly locked and bolted. He dared to knock softly! – No answer! –

In the meantime, Heaven knows how, the muffled murmur had arisen among the crowd that the ridiculous little monster up there really was Little Zaches, who had adopted the proud name Zinnober and elbowed his way up with all kinds of disgraceful lies and deception. The voices rose louder and louder: “Down with the little beast – down – beat the Minister’s jacket off Little Zaches – lock him in a cage – have him shown for money at the fair! – Stick Dutch gold²² on him and give him to the children for a toy! – Up – up!”

And the crowd stormed against the house.

The valet wrung his hands despairingly. “Rebellion – Turmoil – Excellency – open up – save yourself!” – thus he cried; but there was no answer to be heard, save a quiet groaning.

The house doors were smashed down, the wildly laughing crowd crashed up the stairs.

“Now or never,” said the valet, and he ran full force against the cabinet doors, so that they burst off their hinges, whirring and clinking. – No Excellency – no Zinnober to be found! –

“Excellency – my noble Excellency – cannot you hear the rebellion? – Excellency – my noble Excellency, where the dev- God forgive me my sin, where are you deigning to be!”

Thus yelled the valet, running through the rooms in utter desperation. But no answer, no sound, only the mocking echo rang from the marble walls. Zinnober seemed to have disappeared without leaving a trace, without leaving a sound.

Outside things had calmed down, the valet heard the deep, sonorous voice of a woman talking to the crowd; and he became aware, on looking through the window, of the people gradually leaving the house, quietly murmuring among themselves and casting anxious glances up at the windows.

“The rebellion seems to be over,” said the valet, “now the noble Excellency will no doubt come out from his hiding-place.”

He returned to the bed-cabinet, presuming that the Minister would be there after all.

Peering all around, he espied the handsome silver-handled pot that always stood right beside the bathroom, because the Minister valued it

highly as a dear present from the Fürst, and the two thin, rigid little legs sticking up from it.

“God – God!” cried the valet, horrified: “God! – God! – If I’m not mistaken, those little legs over there belong to Hs. Excellency the Minister Zinnober, my noble master!”

He walked over, and looking down he cried, trembling and shuddering all over with terror: “Excellency – Excellency – for God’s, what do you – what are you doing down in those depths!”

But as Zinnober remained silent, the valet clearly saw the danger in which the Excellency was suspended, and that the time had come to push all respect to one side. He grabbed Zinnober’s little legs – pulled him out! – Alas, dead – the little Excellency was dead! The valet broke out into a loud wail; the chasseur, the servants rushed in, and someone ran for the Fürst’s personal physician. Meanwhile the valet dried off his poor, unfortunate master with clean handkerchiefs, laid him in bed, and covered him with silk pillows, so that only his shrivelled little face remained visible.

Now there entered the Fräulein von Rosenschön. She had just, Heaven knows how, pacified the crowd. Now she strode up to the lifeless Zinnober; Liese, Little Zaches’ natural mother, followed her.

Zinnober actually did look more handsome in death than he had ever looked in his entire life. His little eyes were closed, his little nose very white, his mouth slightly turned up in a soft smile; but above all his dark brown hair surged down in the most beautiful curls. The Fräulein placed her hand on the little one’s brow and stroked his hair back, and in that moment a red stripe sparkled then dimly glimmered.

“Ha,” cried the Fräulein, her eyes beaming with joy, “ha, Prosper Alpanus! – Sublime Master, you keep your word! – His fate has been served and all ignominy with it!”

“Oh,” said Old Liese, “oh dear God, there’s no way that can be my little Zaches, *he* never looked as handsome as that. So my coming to the city is a total waste of time, and you haven’t advised me well at all, my Lady!”

“Now don’t grumble, old woman,” replied the Fräulein, “if you had only followed my advice properly, and if you hadn’t pushed your way into this house before I arrived, everything would be better for you. – I repeat, the little one, who lies there dead in bed, is really and truly your son, Little Zaches!”

“Well,” cried the woman with shining eyes, “well, if the little Excellency there really is my child, then I suppose I’ll inherit all the beautiful things around us, the whole house with everything inside?”

“No,” said the Fräulein, “that’s all over and done with now, you missed the right moment to gain the money and the estate. – You are, I said so straightaway, you are just not meant to have riches.”

“Then can’t I,” continued the woman, tears welling in her eyes, “than can’t I at least take my poor little man in my apron and carry him home? – Our Father has so many handsome stuffed little birds and squirrels, he’ll have my Little Zaches stuffed for me, and I’ll place him on my cabinet, like he is there in a red coat with the wide ribbon and the big star on his breast, for eternal remembrance!” –

“That,” cried the Fräulein, almost indignantly, “that is a really simple-minded idea, that will absolutely *not* do!” –

Then the woman began to sob, to wail, to lament. “And what,” she said, “have I got from my Little Zaches acquiring high titles and great wealth! – If he’d only stayed with me, if I’d only brought him up in my poverty, he’d never have fallen into that damned silver thing, he’d still be alive, and perhaps I’d have had pleasure from him and his blessing. If I’d

carried him around in my basket of wood, the people would have felt pity and thrown me many pretty little pieces of money, but now —”

Steps were heard in the entrance hall, the Fräulein drove the old woman out, with the instruction to wait before the door downstairs; when leaving, she would entrust her with an infallible means of ending all her poverty and all her misery with one stroke.

Now Rosabelverde walked up to the little one's side once more and said in the soft, quivering voice of deep pity:

“Poor Zaches! – Nature's stepchild! – I meant well by you! – It was probably foolish of me to believe that the gift of outer beauty I gave you would shine into your inner self and wake a voice that would say to you: ‘You're not the man people think you are, but just keep striving to live up to the man on whose wings you, my lame, callow friend, are soaring to the sky!’

“But no inner voice awoke. Your inert, dead spirit was not able to raise itself, you continued in your stupidity, your coarseness, your uncouthness – Oh! – If you had only been a tiny bit less of a barbaric little lout, you would have avoided this humiliating death! – Prosper Alpanus has taken care that you will now, in death, be taken to be that which you appeared to be in life through my power. If I should perhaps see you again as a little beetle – a quick mouse or a nimble squirrel, then that would please me! – Sleep well, Little Zaches!” –

As Rosabelverde left the room, the Fürst's personal physician walked in with the valet.

“In God's name,” the physician cried, when he saw the dead Zinnober and convinced himself that all means of calling him back to life would remain futile, “in God's name, how did this happen, my good Herr Chamberlain?”

“Oh,” replied the latter, “oh, dear Herr Doctor, the rebellion or the revolution, it’s all one what you call it, was raging and rampaging quite dreadfully outside in the entrance hall. His Excellency, concerned for his dear life, intended without doubt to flee into the bathroom, slipped and –”

“So,” said the doctor, with some ceremony and emotion, “so the very fear of dying made him die!”²³

The doors burst open and Fürst Barsanuph rushed in with a pale countenance, behind him seven even paler chamberlains.

“Is it true, is it true?” cried the Fürst; but as soon as he espied the little one’s corpse, he started back and said, his eyes turned towards Heaven with an expression of the deepest pain:

“Oh Zinnober!”

And the seven chamberlains cried after the Fürst, “Oh Zinnober!” and pulled, as did the Prince, a handkerchief from their pocket and held it to their eyes.

“What a loss,” the Fürst began after a period of silent lamentation, “what an irreplaceable loss for the State! – Where to find a man who wears the ribbon of the Green-Spotted Tiger with twenty buttons with such dignity as my Zinnober! – Personal physician, and you could let *this* man die! Tell me – how did it happen, how could it take place – What was the cause – what did the excellent man die of?” –

The personal physician looked at the little one very carefully, felt the stopped pulses at many places, ran his hand along the head, cleared his throat and began:

“My noble master! Should I content myself with merely scratching the surface, I could say that the Minister died from the complete absence of breath; this absence was effected by the impossibility of drawing breath, and this impossibility was in turn only brought about by the element, by the

humour, into which the Minister plunged. I could say, the Minister had in this way died a humorous death; but may this shallowness be far from me, may the obsession be far from me of wishing to explain by contemptible physical principles everything that finds its natural irrefutable cause only in the realm of the purely psychological. – My noble Fürst, let the word of man be free! – The Minister found the first seed of death in the Order of the Green-Spotted Tiger with twenty buttons!”

“What,” cried the Fürst, flashing eyes glowing with rage at the personal physician, “what! – What are you saying? – The Order of the Green-Spotted Tiger with twenty buttons, which the blessed one wore for the good of the State with so much grace, with so much dignity? – *That* the cause of his death? – Prove this to me, or – Chamberlains, what do you say to this?”

“He must prove it, he must prove it, or –” cried the seven pale chamberlains, and the personal physician continued:

“My dear, most noble Fürst, I will prove it, so no *or!* – The affair has the following connection: The heavy order-sign on the ribbon, but especially the buttons on his back, had a detrimental effect on the ganglions of the spine. At the same time the Order Star gave rise to a pressure on that knotty, filaceous thing between the tricuspid valve and the upper mesentery artery which we call the solar plexus and which predominates in the labyrinthine tissue of nerve networks. This dominating organ stands in the most manifold relation to the cerebral system, and naturally the attack on the ganglions was hostile to this as well. But is the free conduction of the cerebral system not the condition of consciousness, of personality, as the expression of the most perfect union of the whole in a focal point? Is the process of life not the activity in both spheres, in the ganglionic and cerebral system?

“Well! Enough to say, that attack disrupted the functions of the psychological organism. First there came dark ideas about unrecognised sacrifices for the State through the painful wearing of that Order etc.; the condition became more and more dangerous, until the total disharmony of the ganglionic and cerebral system finally brought about total cessation of consciousness, total surrender of personality. But this condition we describe by the word *death!* – Yes, noble master! – The Minister had already given up his personality, and so was already as dead as a doornail when he plunged into that fateful vessel. – So his death had not a physical, but certainly an immeasurably deep psychological cause.”

“Personal physician,” said the Fürst in an ill humour, “personal physician, you have been babbling on for half an hour, and I’ll be damned if I’ve understood a single syllable. What do you mean with your physical and psychological?”

“The physical principle,” continued the physician, “is the prerequisite of purely vegetative life, whereas the psychological presupposes the human organism, which only finds the driving wheel of existence in the mind, in the mental capacity.”

“And still,” cried the Fürst in the deepest displeasure, “and still I don’t understand you, Dr. Incomprehensible!”

“I mean,” said the doctor, “I mean, Serenity, that the physical is only concerned with purely vegetative life without a mental capacity, as occurs in plants, the psychological however with the mental capacity. Now as this latter is prevalent in the human organism, so the doctor must always begin at the mental capacity, at the mind, and regard the body only as the mind’s vassal, which must obey whenever the master commands.”

“Hoho!” cried the Fürst, “hoho, personal physician, let’s leave it at that! – Cure my body, and spare my mind, I have never yet felt incommoded

by it. Actually, personal physician, you are a confused man, and if I were not standing here by my minister's corpse and were not moved, I know what I would do! – Now, chamberlains! Let us shed some more dewy tears here on the immortal one's catafalque, and then we shall go to luncheon."

The Fürst held a handkerchief to his eyes and sobbed, the chamberlains did likewise, and then they all strode away.

Before the door stood old Liese, with several strings of the most beautiful golden-yellow onions one could wish to see hanging over her arm. The Fürst's eyes lighted by chance on these fruits. He stopped, the pain disappeared from his countenance, he smiled softly and graciously, he said:

"Never in my life have I seen such beautiful onions, they must have the most marvellous taste. Are you selling these goods, dear lady?"

"Oh yes," replied Liese with a deep curtsey, "oh yes, Your most noble Highness, I earn my meagre bread by selling onions, as well as it goes! – They are sweet as pure honey, would you care to, noble Lord?"

And she held out a string of the largest, brightest onions to the Fürst. He took it, smiled, smacked his lips a little and then cried: "Chamberlains! Someone give me his pocket-knife."

A knife received, the Fürst neatly and cleanly peeled an onion and tasted a little of the marrow.

"What a taste, what sweetness, what strength, what fire!" he cried, his eyes shining with delight, "and I moreover feel that I can see the immortal Zinnober standing before me, waving and whispering to me: 'Buy – eat these onions, my Fürst – the good of the State demands it!'"

The Fürst pressed a few gold coins into Old Liese's hand, and the chamberlains had to shove whole strings of onions into their pockets. There was more! – He decreed that no one should provide the supply of onions for the princely déjeuner but Liese. In this way Little Zaches' mother, without

exactly becoming rich, left all poverty and all misery behind her, and it was probably certain that she was helped in this by one of the Good Fairy Rosabelverde's secret spells.

The obsequies of Minister Zinnober were some of the most magnificent ever seen in Kerepes; the Fürst, all the Knights of the Green-Spotted Tiger followed the corpse in deep mourning. All the bells were pealed; why, the two small cannons the Prince had purchased – at great expense – with a view to fireworks, were even fired several times. Citizens – people – everyone cried and lamented that the State had lost its best support and a man with such profound understanding, greatness of soul, gentleness, and untiring zeal for the general good as Zinnober would probably never again take over the helm of government.

And the loss was indeed irreplaceable; for never again could there be found a Minister whom the Order of the Green-Spotted Tiger with twenty buttons fitted so well as the immortal, unforgettable Zinnober.

Last Chapter

The Author's melancholy requests. – How Professor Mosch Terpin calmed down and Candida could never become irksome. – How a rose-beetle hummed something into Prosper Alpanus's ear, the latter took his leave and Balthasar had a happy marriage.

It is now time for the man who has written down these pages for you, dear reader, to part from you, and he is overcome with melancholy and yearning at the thought.

He knows much, much more about the curious deeds of little Zinnober, and he would have taken, as he was, after all, prompted to the story from an

irresistible inner urge, real pleasure in telling you, O my reader, all of this. Yet!

Looking back at all the events, as they have occurred in the nine chapters, he probably feels that there is already so much that is wondrous, mad, and in conflict with sober reason contained therein, that he, by amassing yet more of the same, must run the danger of imposing upon your forbearance, dear reader, and completely falling out with you. He asks you with that melancholy, with that yearning that suddenly cramped his breast when he wrote the words, "Last Chapter," that you may, with a really cheerful, open mind, be pleased to look at the strange creations – indeed make friends of them – that the author owes to the inspiration of the uncanny spirit called imagination, and to whose bizarre, capricious character he perhaps abandoned himself too much.

Therefore do not be annoyed with both, with the author and with the capricious spirit! – If you, dear reader, have now and then smiled deep inside at many things, then you were in the very mood the writer of these pages desired, and then, he believes, you will no doubt make many allowances for him! –

Actually, the story could have concluded with little Zinnober's tragic death. But isn't it more pleasant when, instead of sorrowful obsequies, there is a merry wedding at the end?

So let us briefly turn our thoughts to fair Candida and fortunate Balthasar. –

Professor Mosch Terpin was normally an enlightened Man of the World, who, in accordance with the wise adage *Nil admirari*, had for many, many years been in the habit of not being amazed at anything in the world. But now it so happened that he, surrendering all his wisdom, had to be continually amazed; so that in the end he complained that he no longer knew

if he was really the Professor Mosch Terpin who had formerly directed Natural Affairs in the State, and if he was still really walking along, head in the air, on his dear feet.

He was first amazed when Balthasar introduced Doctor Prosper Alpanus to him as his uncle and the Doctor produced before him the deed of gift, by dint of which Balthasar became the proprietor of a country house situated an hour away from Kerepes, together with woodland, fields and meadows; and when he, hardly trusting his eyes, saw mentioned in the inventory exquisite household goods, even gold and silver bars, the value of which easily exceeded the riches of the princely treasury. Then he was amazed when he looked at the magnificent coffin, in which Zinnober lay, through Balthasar's lorgnette and he suddenly had the impression that there had never been a Minister Zinnober, but only an uncouth, barbaric little squirt, who had erroneously been taken for an intelligent, wise Minister Zinnober.

But Mosch Terpin's amazement rose to the greatest degree when Prosper Alpanus took him around his country house, showed him his library and other very wonderful things, and even personally performed several very charming experiments with strange plants and animals.

The idea dawned on the Professor that his natural research probably didn't matter in the least and he was sitting enclosed in a marvellous, colourful, magical world as if in an egg. This thought disturbed him so much that he ended up crying and wailing like a child. Balthasar immediately led him to the spacious wine cellar, where he espied gleaming barrels and flashing bottles. He could study better here, said Balthasar, than in the princely wine cellar; and he could investigate Nature sufficiently in the beautiful park.

Whereupon the Professor calmed down.

Balthasar's wedding was celebrated at the country house. He – the friends – Fabian – Pulcher – everyone was astounded at Candida's great beauty, at the enchanting charm that lay in her dress, in her whole being. – And it really was an enchantment surrounding her; for the Fairy Rosabelverde, who, forgetting all grudges, was attending the wedding as Sister von Rosenschön, had personally dressed her and decorated her with the most beautiful, the most splendid roses. Now everyone well knows that the dress must fit well when a fairy lends a hand. Moreover, Rosabelverde had given the fair bride a magnificently sparkling necklace, which worked the magical effect that she, when wearing it, could never get annoyed at trivialities, at a badly fastened ribbon, at a wayward hair-ornament, at a stain on the linen or whatever. This property, given her by the necklace, spread an especial grace and cheerfulness over her whole countenance.

The bridal pair was in the highest heaven of bliss and yet – such was the marvellous effect of Alpan's wise, secret magic – still had eyes and words for the bosom friends assembled there. Prosper Alpanus and Rosabelverde both saw to it that the loveliest wonders glorified the wedding day. The sweet sounds of love rang out everywhere from bushes and trees, while shimmering tables rose up, loaded with the most marvellous foods and with crystal bottles from which flowed forth the noblest wine, pouring the ardour of life throughout every guest's veins.

Night had fallen, when fiery-flaming rainbows stretched over the whole park, and you saw shimmering birds and insects soaring up and down; and when they shook their wings they scattered forth millions of sparks, which constantly changed and formed all sorts of fair figures that danced in the air and fluttered and disappeared into the bushes. And all this time the music of the forest rang out with ever-greater force, and the night-wind wafted along, whispering mysteriously and breathing out sweet scents.

Balthasar, Candida and the friends recognised Alpan's powerful magic; but Mosch Terpin, half-intoxicated, laughed out loud and said, none other than that devil of a fellow, the Fürst's operatic designer and firework-maker, was behind all this.

Bells rang out with piercing peals. A shining rose-beetle swept down, landed on Prosper Alpanus's shoulder, and seemed to be softly humming something in his ear.

Prosper Alpanus rose from his seat and said in a serious and ceremonial voice: "Dear Balthasar – fair Candida – my friends! – The time has now come – Lothos calls – I must depart."

Thereupon he approached the bridal couple and spoke quietly with them. Both Balthasar and Candida were very moved; Prosper seemed to be giving them all sorts of good advice, and he fervently embraced them both.

Then he turned to the Fräulein von Rosenschön and spoke quietly with her as well – she was probably giving him commissions in magical and fairy affairs, which he willingly undertook.

In the meantime a small crystal carriage, harnessed with two shimmering dragonflies driven by the silver pheasant, dropped down from the sky.

"Farewell – farewell!" cried Prosper Alpanus; then he climbed into the carriage and floated up and away over the blazing rainbows, until his cart appeared, at last, in the highest heavens as a small, twinkling star, which finally concealed itself behind the clouds.

"Nice Montgolfière," snorted Mosch Terpin and he sank, overcome by the power of the wine, into a deep sleep.

Balthasar, mindful of Prosper Alpanus's advice, and using the possession of the wonderful country house well, actually did become a good poet; and as the estate's other qualities, which Prosper had extolled, with a

view to the fair Candida, completely proved their worth, and Candida never took off the necklace that Sister von Rosenschön had given her as a wedding gift, then Balthasar could not fail to have the happiest marriage in the utmost bliss and magnificence – as only a poet may ever have had with a pretty young woman.

But here the Fairy Tale of Little Zaches, Great Zinnober, has really, utterly, a happy

Ending

¹ A sovereign Prince.

² 10 August.

³ A mandrake. According to superstition, a mandrake root grew beneath a hanged man, and was credited with magical powers. This root is so similar to the human shape that “English folklore distinguished even sex differences and commonly referred to *mandrakes* and *womandrakes*” (Funk & Wagnall, *Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology and Legend*, New York 1949).

⁴ Georg Rixner’s ‘Book of Tourneys’ (1530) gave the coats-of-arms of the most prominent noble families.

⁵ This term refers to the felting of head-hairs as a result of infestation by lice – a common disease in Poland at the time. Superstition ascribed the weaving of these plaits (“Zöpfe”) to a brownie (“Wichtel”).

⁶ A generic name for various cotton goods.

⁷ Judges, 15:15.

⁸ ‘Hetzpeitsche’ – an example of the aggressive student slang of the time.

⁹ An insult that provokes a duel (student slang).

¹⁰ St Jerome (342-420).

¹¹ Lucas Cranach (1472-1553) – an artist who moved away from Italian models: hence a thoroughbred German.

¹² ‘Zinnober’ is the German word for ‘cinnabar’. It also means ‘nonsense, rubbish.’

¹³ “A philosophical toy, consisting of a hollow figure, partly filled with water and partly with air, and made to float in a vessel nearly filled with water, having an air-tight elastic covering. This covering being pressed down, the air inside the vessel is compressed, and more water forced through a small aperture into the figure, which consequently sinks, to rise again when the external pressure is removed.” (OED)

¹⁴ Giovanni Battista Viotti (1753-1824), Italian virtuoso and composer.

¹⁵ A glass harmonica, consisting of glass bells which would be stroked by a wet finger. This instrument became associated with hypnotism; and because its sounds were believed to cause illness, insanity and even death, it was banned.

¹⁶ A frill formerly worn by men on the front of the shirt, edging the opening.

¹⁷ Johann Christian Wieglob’s ‘Unterricht in der natürlichen Magie’ (‘Lessons in Natural Magic’) of 1782.

¹⁸ ‘Linné’s Ape Beelzebub, black, bearded on the lower regions and brown-red above the tail’ – a humorously distorted description.

¹⁹ An ancient Indian poem.

²⁰ A legendary Chinese Minister (3rd millennium B.C.).

²¹ An old variety of backgammon.

²² An alloy of copper and zinc beaten into thin sheets and used to ornament toys.

²³ A parody of a line from Friedrich Schlegel’s Tragedy ‘Alarcos’ (1802).