

WOLF BAUDISSLIN

LIFE IN A GERMAN
CRACK REGIMENT

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Life in a German Crack Regiment

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Содержание

PREFACE	5
CHAPTER I	6
CHAPTER II	12
CHAPTER III	18
CHAPTER IV	26
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	30

Wolf Ernst Hugo Emil Baudissin

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PREFACE

Lieutenant Bilse, Beyerlein, and Baron von Schlicht,¹ the author of the present work, with their many less-known followers, have managed among them to create what may be regarded as a novel of a new species – the "critical" military novel. What is commonly called the "military novel," has, of course, long been known in Germany, but it differed considerably from the new species. The older military novel gave more or less lively pictures of camp, garrison and casino life, and the gay young lieutenant who generally figured as hero was much adored by ladies (as indeed he still is). But between the lieutenant of romance and the lieutenant of stern reality there is a gulf. Readers have now before them the lieutenant of reality, and the uplifting of the veil on his interesting, if not very edifying, personality and doings, has aroused in Germany a curious storm of indignation, especially in army and official circles. Indeed, as may be remembered, Baron von Schlicht was "insulted" over the present work in the Reichstag itself, and the affair went so far that a duel nearly followed. The widespread interest taken in these revelations of military life is testified by the number of copies of the present work (40,000) which have been sold in Germany, though its circulation is now forbidden there; while for his outspokenness in this novel it is rumoured that Baron von Schlicht has to meet his trial in Berlin very shortly.

Though widely known as the author of various military sketches and stories of a more or less light and humorous turn, in the present case Baron von Schlicht shows little trace of his characteristic vein. Here, rather, he devotes himself seriously to making what is in effect a detailed and apparently dispassionate *exposé* in regard to the manners and morals of officers of the old nobility in the German army. The indignation aroused against him is all the greater as he himself belongs to the old nobility which he so freely criticises, and he has the further advantage of speaking from inside knowledge of the officers' caste (Offiziers-Kaste) to which he himself belonged during his military career. Lieutenant Bilse wrote from outside this circle of the old nobility; thus Baron von Schlicht's work fills a gap which Lieutenant Bilse's book still left open.

R. M.

¹ This is a pen-name. The author's actual name is Count von Baudissin.

CHAPTER I

By Command of the Emperor

The "Yellow Butterflies," as Franz Ferdinand Leopold's infantry regiment was called on account of its yellow epaulettes, was celebrating its anniversary; the day when, more than forty years ago, it lost in a famous battle a third of its rank and file and more than half of its officers. The memory of the heroic deeds of the regiment could not be allowed to perish; the younger generation were continually reminded of them, and thus the celebration of the anniversary of the famous battle was accompanied by the toast: "In remembrance of the fallen; for the encouragement of the living." The fallen, for what they had done, were given every year a magnificent wreath tied with a gigantic ribbon of the regimental colours; the living, who had as yet done nothing, were given a splendid dinner with equally splendid wine: and when the enthusiasm aroused by the official speech of the colonel, under the influence of the champagne, had done its work, the officers all declared again and again that when the regiment went into battle they would know how to die as bravely as their comrades – and they really meant what they swore.

To-day the anniversary was being celebrated with especial magnificence, for new officers' quarters were to be opened, which were to be used exclusively as a mess-room. Only at mid-day, as he was preparing his oration, did it occur to the colonel that the dedication of this building, which was intended for purely pleasurable purposes, was not altogether in harmony with the solemn anniversary of the dead. He could not very well say, "In order to honour the noble dead we open to-day our new mess-room, which, I hope, will be a financial success." Certainly that would not do. Then a way out of the difficulty occurred to the colonel; he would simply say, "And we vow to the fallen heroes, that within these walls we will above all practise the spirit of comradeship, and the soldierly virtues, which animated them and fitted them to perform their heroic deeds." That would make a suitable impression; and so in a pleasant frame of mind he betook himself to the mess-room where there was much excitement and bustle. In the morning the usual formalities had been followed; almost all the former officers of the regiment had appeared, the closely allied regiments had sent deputations, and nobody had come with empty hands. A veritable shower of silver ornaments had been poured upon the "Golden Butterflies," and now all were thronging into the reception-rooms, greeting mutual friends, admiring the presents, and awaiting the arrival of the important officials.

Dinner was to take place at seven o'clock, and on the stroke of the hour the representative of His Majesty appeared. Originally the Emperor had promised the regiment the honour of his presence, but at the last moment he had been prevented from attending.

The music began, and in a long procession the company went into the dining hall. A cry of admiration broke from the lips of everyone at the sight of the magnificent apartment with its gorgeous decorations and beautifully laid table.

The officers of the "Golden Butterflies" who led in the guests swaggered a bit, and drew themselves up as much as to say, "Yes, this is what we're like, that's how we do things. We have been quite long enough housed in a fashion unbecoming to our rank. But now, where is the regiment that can boast of such apartments?" They knew that on account of their old mess-room, in which, according to the declaration of a cavalry officer of the Guards, no self-respecting man could feel really happy, they had often been slighted. Formerly they had been the worst off in this respect; now they were the best. The "Golden Butterflies" beamed; each word of compliment and admiration which the guests expressed sounded like heavenly music in the ears of the officers, and each seemed as proud as if it were due to him that at last they had a new mess-room. And in truth, each had done his share, for if all of them did not appreciate so highly the calling and honour of an officer as in bygone days, yet the officers and friends of the regiment in earlier times could never have raised such a large sum

as was required for the erection and furnishing of this building. As the bearers of old and honoured names, each of the officers was conscious of his position and his duty, for the "Golden Butterflies" were proud to be considered one of the haughtiest and most exclusive of regiments in the whole army.

With pride they regarded their guests, all of whom bore important names. A lieutenant of the Uhlans, Baron Gersbach, whom all knew as a great gambler, stuck his eyeglass in his eye, examined the persons at the table, and then turned to his neighbour; "Really a highly select company; not a single man belonging to the middle class is present."

"Yes, but there is – one – "

The Uhlan stuck his eyeglass more firmly in to his eye to discover which it was.

"Who is it?" he asked at last.

"The architect who built the place."

"Ah, well, he hardly counts. But why did you invite him to dinner?"

"We thought about the matter for a very long time, but we came to the conclusion we could not do otherwise. The fellow formerly served in this regiment for a year, and out of attachment and love for the regiment he drew up the plans free of cost, and he has also charged nothing for all the trouble he has taken. Well, we had to show ourselves equally obliging."

The Uhlan nodded approvingly. "Yes, I quite understand, and such an invitation is not only the easiest, but the most magnificent form of thanks. To the end of his days the fellow will live on the remembrance of this evening, and besides that it is a splendid recommendation for him to have dined with us. I must say, considering his class, he seems a very decent sort of fellow; fancy, his hands are manicured! What's his name?"

"I think it's Klipper, Lipper, Wipper, or something of that sort."

"Oh, well, it doesn't matter. By the way, have you heard," went on the Uhlan, "what is said to have happened in a line regiment at a festival dinner? A fellow – I don't like to use the word comrade in such a connection – well, as I was saying, a fellow made a fool of himself, and in his drunkenness – for I must call his condition by that name – he gave an ensign a sounding box on the ears at the dinner-table because the latter, in his opinion, did not jump up quickly enough when the besotted beast pledged his health."

"It's incredible!"

"Nevertheless it is true."

"Do you know what will happen next?"

Baron Gersbach shrugged his shoulders. "What can happen? They cannot fight a duel, for it is impossible for an ensign to challenge his superior."

"Yes, that is so," agreed the other.

"There are only two possible ways of settling the thing: either the lieutenant, if he should ever become sober again, must beg the ensign's pardon in the presence of the officers and all those who witnessed the affair, or the lieutenant must flee, and then the ensign must settle with himself whether he will go on living with the blow on his cheek unavenged. But in any case his career is all over – at any rate in our regiment. An ensign who had suffered such a box on the ears would not be made an officer."

Both were silent for a moment, then the signal was given to fill the glasses. The two officers drank each other's health, and the Uhlan continued: "One can't help feeling very sorry for the unfortunate ensign; he is said to have been entirely blameless in the whole affair, and to attack an ensign is really far worse than to insult one's equal. But these things happen to-day because they are not more careful in the choice of men who are going to be officers. To-day, anybody who has the necessary cash, and belongs to a family that has not come into conflict with the police, can become a lieutenant."

The other acquiesced. "Alas, it is such a pity that the necessity of increasing our army forces us to choose officers from the middle class."

The Uhlan emptied his glass again, and then said: "You are quite right, although it cannot be denied that some of the middle class are very decent. I must own that I became acquainted with a couple of fellows – in our regiment of course they would have been quite impossible – but I met them several times in the train –"

The officer of the "Golden Butterflies" looked up with astonishment. "Do you mean to say that you travel second class?"

"Who, I?" At first the Uhlan was quite disconcerted, then he laughed loud and long: "What a joke! Do you suppose I travel second class? Perhaps you'll give me a free pass? Or do you think I act as an agent, perhaps? If I were to write this to my dear papa he would be highly amused."

It was long before the Uhlan had recovered his composure, then he said: "When I said just now I had got to know these fellows in the train, I was speaking figuratively. I meant a mere passing acquaintanceship, and as I told you these people were really quite nice, it was very amusing to me to talk with a fellow from the provinces who lives in such different circumstances. I was highly amused when they told me how they spent their month's salary of fifty or sixty marks. Just think, why, my hairdresser gets that!" Then quite suddenly he broke off and said: "By the way, we were disputing yesterday at mess as to how long it really was since the last officer belonging to the middle class had his discharge from your regiment."

"On 15th May it will be four years."

The Uhlan looked up astonished. "Just fancy, you remember the exact date!"

"Well, one does not easily forget such a joyful date."

"You are quite right, but haven't you got a *bourgeois* fellow among the ensigns?"

"Not a single one. The colonel has laid it down that under no circumstances whatever will he receive such a man."

"Very sensible of him. First of all, such a fellow would not suit here at all; secondly, he would be a great source of annoyance to you; thirdly, he himself would feel highly uncomfortable. The proper thing is for people to remain in their own class. And the common people who will not understand that talk about 'Caste' feeling and the 'Aristocratic Spirit'! – well, let them talk, what does it matter to us?"

After a slight pause the officer of the "Golden Butterflies" said: "Do you know I have been thinking a good deal lately about that 'Caste' feeling and aristocratic prejudice. Whenever the Guards give a dinner the glasses are raised to symbolise that the spirit which inspires the officers must remain ever the same. Now I think this means that not only must we ever cherish love and fidelity for the ruling house, but also that we must ever remain 'first-class men,' with the same ideas as we hold now. As bearers of noble names, and belonging to the most important regiment, we must ever be conscious of our exclusive position, and so stand firmly together, and we must maintain strictly the barrier that divides us from the middle class. Let us drink once more to this hope; that the Guards may ever remain what we now are – bearers of the oldest names, 'first-class' men!"

The conversation of his neighbour had been far too long for the Uhlan, who had scarcely listened to what he was saying; nevertheless he re-echoed his words, "Let us drink." But just as he was about to raise his glass a universal shout arose; the colonel had risen and given the first cheer for the head of the army, and the second to the representative of His Majesty, who was there present.

After a short pause the latter rose to thank them for the honour they had done him, then he continued: "His Majesty has commanded me to express his extreme regret that he cannot be present to-day at the anniversary festival of the regiment; His Majesty has been pleased to command me to offer to the regiment that has always distinguished itself in war and peace his royal greeting, and to assure the regiment of his imperial favour and his imperial good wishes. His Majesty is quite sure that in the future, as in the past, he may always depend upon the regiment, and he knows that each of you is ready now as ever to sacrifice his life for his country and his king, therefore His Majesty trusts that the spirit that has always distinguished this regiment – the spirit of good fellowship – shall be always fostered, and especially, here in these rooms."

The exalted personage paused, and a murmur of approval ran through the assembled officers and guests who were standing up to listen to the speech.

"Now the health of the regiment is going to be drunk," they all said, and they looked to see whether their glasses were full, for it was due to each man that in his own regiment his glass should be full.

But the expected conclusion of the speech was not immediately forthcoming; the exalted personage was visibly embarrassed, and it was apparent to everyone that he had still something to say, but could not for the moment find the right words. At last he regained his composure, and said: "Gentlemen, finally, His Majesty has commanded me to inform you that to-day he has transferred to your regiment Lieutenant Winkler, the son of His Majesty's commercial adviser, who was formerly in the 25th Infantry Regiment. And now, gentlemen," continued the Prince, in a louder tone, and visibly relieved, "lift your glasses to the prosperity of this magnificent regiment, whose officers unite in themselves the best names in the land, and whose subalterns and rank and file present a shining example of the most faithful fulfilment of duty – here's to the regiment. Hurrah! hurrah! hurrah!"

They felt as if they had been throttled; such a sorrowful "hurrah" had never before been heard, and it was a fortunate thing that the loud-sounding fanfare echoed through the hall.

The "hurrahs" were over, His Highness had taken his seat again, but the rest remained standing, staring at each other as if they could not have heard aright, as if each wanted to learn from his neighbour's face whether what he had just heard could really be the fact.

"We have become a plebeian regiment."

Nobody knew who pronounced the word first, but at once the phrase passed from lip to lip – "We have become plebeian."

It was just as if a jug of cold water had been thrown into their faces, and indeed when at last they sat down to the table again and the music struck up a merry *potpourri*, they could not grasp, they could not take it in, this inevitable thing – that once more a "commoner" was in the regiment.

All their gay spirits had fled; indeed it appeared to the officers of the "Golden Butterflies" as if a quite new spirit had taken possession of the building. The festival had lost its splendour; it seemed as if the silver itself suddenly shone less brilliantly, as if the glass were less finely cut, and as if the hall no longer possessed the unique elegance that had hitherto distinguished it.

A painful silence reigned at the table, the "Golden Butterflies" did not venture to talk to their guests, for they knew they would be besieged by questions as to who and what this Winkler really was, where he came from, whatever could have caused His Majesty to transfer him from his frontier garrison town to this proud and distinguished regiment. It must have some signification. They did not venture even to look at their guests, for they knew that in the faces of the latter would stand clearly written: "You are no longer what you were; you cannot indeed help it that you have become plebeian, but the fact remains, and your position will be affected by this in the future."

If only the news that they were to receive a plebeian lieutenant had been communicated to them privately – but no, it had been announced publicly, in the presence of all the assembled guests, so that there was no possibility of denial or subterfuge. It was a direct slap in the face for them, and for the former officers, some of whom had come from a distance to be present at the dedication of the new buildings. And now into that new house a new element had been introduced. A commoner! Why had the regiment deserved it that the glory that had hitherto distinguished it should be removed? On the former occasion when a plebeian lieutenant had dwelt among them for a short time they had all suffered, and it was esteemed a special mark of the Emperor's favour that on the personally expressed wish of the officers he had been transferred to a line regiment. When they were again relieved of the stigma, each had sworn to live more zealously for the honour of the regiment so that a plebeian should not for a second time be received in their midst. Now this very thing had happened.

The Uhlan had regarded for a long time his neighbour who was looking gloomily in front of him; now he felt impelled to utter a sympathetic word, and everything that he felt in the depth of his heart he put into the remark, "What a pity! you were all so jolly in your regiment."

The officer of the "Golden Butterflies" shrugged his shoulders. What did these words mean but this: "The beginning has been made, other commoners will follow this one, and even if he does remain the only one, you will never be again what you once were."

The Uhlans were considered a frightfully exclusive regiment, and the "Golden Butterflies" had made the greatest efforts to maintain friendly and cordial relations with them. At last they had succeeded, and to-day the Uhlans almost to a man had appeared; the most aristocratic of regiments had been *fêted* with a costly dinner; and now, scarcely had the friendship been sealed when it was immediately threatened.

All breathed more freely when at last they rose from the table; the "Golden Butterflies" were most anxious to talk to each other, and learn something more of their new comrade. Somebody or other must know something about him; the fellow must have some sort of reputation – as much as was possible for a commoner, of course – otherwise His Majesty would not have interested himself on his behalf.

It was in this way that the men who had fallen into two groups – the guests, and the present and former officers – expressed their opinions; each had something to say as to his idea concerning the event.

The "Golden Butterflies" surrounded the adjutant of the regiment, Count Wettborn; he had become quite white, and was nervously fidgeting with the laces of his faultless patent-leather boots. After the colonel the matter concerned him most closely of all; he was often the representative and delegate of the officers, and now, was he to become a representative of a Winkler, he, a count? He was tall, of proud, imposing appearance; on his breast glittered as his latest decoration an order of the Fourth Class, which he had won as leader of the ball at court. For two years he had occupied this proud position; it was not only a great honour for him, but also for the whole regiment, and when he had stepped back into the rank he had been named adjutant, and all had heartily concurred in this promotion, deeming him the most worthy among them.

"But, count, do tell us, you must know something, who is this Winkler, then?"

Anxiously they all looked at the count; dead silence reigned, they scarcely dared to breathe.

"Gentlemen," at last said the adjutant, "whatever the colonel and I know we have just learnt from His Serene Highness. Old Winkler is a manufacturer."

They felt as if a stone had been rolled from their hearts. A manufacturer! It was not up to much, certainly, and not to be compared, of course, with the social position of a country gentleman or a chamberlain; but still, Krupp had been nothing more nor less than a manufacturer, and the German Emperor had called him his friend before the whole world. A load was taken from their hearts; but immediately they all saw that the count had still something on his mind, and that the question of being a manufacturer had some connection with it.

"And what does the fellow manufacture? Cannon or machines?"

"Neither – trouser buttons." If a flash of lightning had suddenly struck the officers they could not have started more quickly and with greater horror.

"Good heavens!" They looked around to see if any of the guests or the orderlies were close by, and then they crowded round the adjutant again.

Belitz, a very tall officer, was the first to recover himself; he was on very good terms with the adjutant, almost his friend indeed, and so he ventured to say, "Don't play any stupid jokes upon us, we are not in the mood for them, and such things should not be said in jest. Now do really tell us what the old fellow manufactures."

The count looked at the speaker calmly. "My dear fellow, I am not in the least in the mood for a joke, but I told you the fact. Old Winkler manufactures buttons, of course, wholesale. He has

three large factories, and employs thousands of workmen, who are said to be splendidly looked after. For several years he has been on the Town Council, and for three he has been commercial adviser to the Emperor; quite lately he contributed a hundred thousand marks to a charitable institution which is under the special patronage of His Majesty, and he has also promised a contribution of twenty thousand marks for the next five years. He refused an important order that was offered him, and when he was asked in what way he could be thanked, he answered that it would be an intense pleasure to him if his only son might be transferred from a frontier garrison town to Berlin, so that he could see him more frequently. His wish could not be refused, and so his son has come to us."

After a slight pause, during which the deepest stillness reigned, the adjutant continued: "The transference of Lieutenant Winkler to our regiment is at the personal request of His Majesty. It behoves us, therefore, not to criticise His Majesty's commands. I beg you to remember this, and to restrain any expressions of opinion."

It was perfectly clear and unmistakable that the adjutant spoke in the name, and at the request of the colonel, and silently one after another retired.

But the silence was far more expressive than words. Dejectedly the "Golden Butterflies" walked about; they had not the spirit to ask their guests to remain when, much earlier than usual, the latter prepared to depart. It was a matter of complete indifference whether they stayed an hour longer or not; the spirit of the thing had vanished; the festivity was ruined. The rooms were soon empty, one after another departed, only the "Golden Butterflies" remained. And they, when at last they were quite alone, asked themselves again, "Why have we deserved this?"

In one corner of the room, all huddled up on a sofa, sat young Willberg, the darling and favourite of all, a young lieutenant of six-and-twenty, whose father had been in the regiment and had won the Iron Cross of the First Class on that memorable day. Young Willberg had evidently indulged somewhat freely in wine; he was in a state of abject misery, and wept and sobbed like a child.

"Willberg, whatever is the matter?" his comrades asked him sympathetically, as they came nearer him.

He raised his face which was usually fresh and youthful-looking, but now the glittering tears ran down his cheeks, and in a heart-breaking tone of voice he sobbed out: "My regiment, my beloved regiment."

Not a single one of those who stood around him could offer him a word of consolation – they were all as mournful as death.

CHAPTER II

Introduced to the Regiment

"To-day at twelve o'clock I desire to speak with the officers in undress uniform."

The colonel's command was communicated to all the officers, and now, full of expectation, they were standing outside the mess-room. To the questions: "What's the matter with the old fellow now? Has anyone got cleaned out?" the answer was immediately given: "Winkler came to-day and is to be introduced to us all."

And this universal answer was followed on each occasion by a universal "Ah" – an expression of the deepest commiseration and the greatest disappointment. Winkler had really come? How many ardent prayers had not been raised to heaven that he would *not* come! And in his innermost heart each man had still hoped that the order of exchange would be recalled. His Majesty had heard privately, through inquiries of an adjutant, what they thought about this new comrade; they had not concealed their views, but instead of the hoped-for order of recall, the adjutant had one day reappeared, and had quite casually, and in the way of conversation, yet in spite of that, with an official air, given them to understand that His Majesty was very vexed at what he had heard of the officers' views concerning Lieutenant Winkler. His Majesty had expressed his sincerest hope that the regiment would receive their new member with open arms. The adjutant's words had not failed to have effect; not that the officers suddenly changed their views, but they took care not to say what they thought in his presence any more.

Now Winkler had really come. "What does he look like?" "What sort of an impression does he make?" "Has anyone spoken to him?"

There was a torrent of questions. Suddenly it struck twelve, and to the minute the colonel appeared with his adjutant and Lieutenant Winkler.

The first lieutenant motioned the officers to their places, and the colonel immediately began:

"Gentlemen, I have requested you to meet me in order to introduce to you our new comrade, Lieutenant Winkler. Allow me to introduce you, Lieutenant Winkler."

Lieutenant Winkler stepped forward and saluted in a friendly way; he stood there erect and courteous, a man of medium size, slim, yet strong. He was a very well developed man, and the becoming uniform of the "Golden Butterflies," with its rich gold embroidery, suited him excellently; on his young and fresh-looking countenance – he was twenty-seven years of age – with its thick, light moustache, and in his clear, blue eyes, was written energy and independence. Many of the officers there present could scarcely conceal a certain unrest and embarrassment. Winkler's face alone remained absolutely cool.

The "Golden Butterflies" examined their new comrade with searching eyes, just as if they were examining a horse that had been led before them. They cast a glance at his figure, at his legs, looked him over to see if he would do well at a parade march, and whether his outward appearance was equal to the demands which were made on a member of so important a regiment. According as they were satisfied with their examination, they put their hands more or less cordially, or in some cases only a finger, to their caps.

"Lieutenant Winkler," continued the colonel, "a very great honour has been paid you; at the direct request of His Majesty you have been made a member of a regiment which can look back on a glorious past, and whose officers have always been distinguished for the purity of their character, the gallantry of their spirit and their honourable lives, both as soldiers and gentlemen. You come among us from a different garrison, from totally different surroundings. You have been bred and reared in circumstances where people do not hold the same views as we do. It must be your first endeavour to become, in the truest sense of the word, one of us, for the uniform does not make the man, it

is the spirit which puts the seal on him. And the financial material circumstances of a man are not without their influence on the *esprit de corps* of a regiment. You, Lieutenant Winkler, probably have the disposal of an allowance which is so large that it bears no relation to the small amounts which most of my officers have to do with. You, sir, have grown up in a circle where money plays the most important part, where, to a certain extent, the honour in which a man is held depends upon the size of his banking account. But our great pride is that, with our small means, or rather I should say, in spite of our small means, we remain what we are. In course of time you will see for yourself how many of your comrades are obliged to stint themselves merely to make both ends meet, and how they are obliged to deprive themselves of all kinds of things in order to maintain a dignified appearance. Although I am delighted to hear that, while you were living in a small garrison town, you were economical and eschewed all luxuries, now that you are transferred to Berlin I must beg you most earnestly, and warn you most emphatically, to resist the various temptations that will assail you here. Keep to the modest mode of life, and do not fall into the fault, so easy to youth, of boasting of your riches and wealth, and of playing for large stakes with your comrades. If you attend to my admonition, then a friendly and cordial relationship will grow up between you and these gentlemen, to whom you are now a stranger." And, turning to the adjutant, he continued: "Count, I beg you to introduce Lieutenant Winkler now to the individual officers."

The introductions were made strictly according to etiquette, beginning with the lieutenant-colonel and ending with the youngest lieutenant.

It was only when the names of the lieutenants were read out that there was any sign of life in Winkler's bearing. During the colonel's long speech, and while the names of his superior officers were being read, he stood immovable, his hand in the attitude of salute – and everyone had to admit that he stood well – without moving or swerving. His face was so well under control that not a muscle moved, and not a line on his countenance betrayed what he felt at the colonel's remarks. When the names of the lieutenants were given – he saluted the first lieutenants as his superiors – his bearing relaxed somewhat, and he returned the salutes of his comrades cordially. And he saluted well – everybody had to admit that likewise.

At last he was able to release his hand, and stand at ease once more; his arm was almost numb and the muscles of his legs trembled and smarted, but by no sign did he betray this.

"Lieutenant Winkler is placed in the second battalion, fifth company."

All glances were directed towards the captain of the fifth company, Baron von Warnow; he was considered the most important officer in the regiment; he was of very ancient descent, which he could trace back to the Emperor Barbarossa, in whose campaigns a Warnow had distinguished himself. He was married to a Countess Mäilny, had a very large fortune, and his house was considered the most aristocratic in Berlin. Whenever it was a question of representing the regiment, or of sending a deputation anywhere, it was Baron von Warnow who was always nominated. On account of his birth and his connection with the most important families in the country he was pre-eminently fitted for such appointments. And he was just as distinguished in his military career as in his private life. He permitted no swearing or bad behaviour among his officers. He attempted, as his comrades laughingly said, to make a gentleman of every musketeer, and in his first lieutenant, Baron von Felsen, he had an excellent assistant. For the last fortnight he had only had one officer attached to his company, for a short time ago his lieutenant had been thrown while riding and had broken his arm. It would be at least a month before he could be on active service again, but it had never occurred to him that another officer would be assigned to him.

And now he was to have Lieutenant Winkler in his company – he, Baron von Warnow!

He could scarcely conceal his annoyance; his thick brows contracted, and he was about to mutter something in a rage when he met Winkler's glance. The latter, when he heard his captain's name, looked round to see which among the many to whom he had been introduced was Baron von Warnow. When he saw the latter's disappointed and almost furious countenance, he knew at once

that that was the Baron! He fixed his eyes upon him almost as if he was saying: "What harm have I done you?" Perhaps his face became a shade paler, but his voice had its quiet, steady tone when he stepped up to his superior officer and saluted him.

Baron von Warnow returned the salute by a bare finger, then he said: "It would have been more in order if you had, first of all, saluted your major."

Winkler flushed red, then he repaired the omission and stepped up to Baron von Masemann, his superior lieutenant, in order to get to know him a little better as they were to be in the same company. He took his friendliness as a matter of course, but he merely received a curt, "I am much obliged to you."

The colonel conversed with the staff officers; the other officers chattered in various groups. Winkler stood quite alone, nobody troubled about him, and he breathed more freely when the colonel at last dismissed the officers.

As Winkler was turning to go, his captain, who was talking to the first lieutenant, called to him: "One moment, if you please, Lieutenant Winkler," and after a little pause continued: "I do not know, Lieutenant Winkler, whether you are already aware of the fact, otherwise I had better tell you at once, that a thoroughly good and healthy tone is maintained in my company; I must therefore beg you to avoid all cursing and swearing, my men are accustomed to be treated as decent persons. It is a very great honour for you to be in my company, and it is to be hoped that you will strive to maintain it worthily." And turning to his first lieutenant he continued: "My dear baron, if at first Lieutenant Winkler does not find it easy to maintain the right tone, you will be kind enough to help him."

The first lieutenant acquiesced with a salute, then the captain turned again to Winkler: "We shall see each other again to-morrow on duty; kindly give the sergeant-major your address, so that we may know where to send the orders."

"Certainly, sir."

"Then there is nothing more for me to say. I am obliged to you for coming, gentlemen."

The two lieutenants turned to go, and silently they walked together over the great courtyard. It was not till they had passed the door of the mess-room that the baron said: "We do not dine till six o'clock; will you join us in the mess-room for lunch?"

But Winkler declined. "I must go and report myself to the superior authorities, and, besides, I have still a good deal to do."

The other did not press him further, and so with a few words they took leave of one another.

Winkler called a fly; it was nearly three o'clock when he at last reached the hotel in which he had taken rooms for the time being.

"Have any letters come for me?" he inquired. He had had no news from home for three days; he had telegraphed to his parents that he would be in Berlin to-day, and he hoped to receive a warm letter of greeting from them.

The porter looked through the letters.

"Nothing has come for you, sir."

Winkler could scarcely conceal his disappointment. Just to-day when he felt so terribly solitary and alone a kindly letter from his parents would have been so very welcome. He had been quite prepared for not being warmly welcomed by his new regiment, but he had not had the faintest idea that the officers would have received him with such coldness and such aversion.

"The key is in the room upstairs, sir."

With a troubled air he went upstairs. To his astonishment the door of the sitting-room was not locked, and when he opened it and walked into the rooms he was greeted with a loud, hearty laugh.

"Ha! ha! George, my boy, here's a surprise for you, isn't it? I told the porter I'd wring his neck if he told you of my arrival; for two hours I've been sitting here and waiting for you. Now, thank heaven, you're here at last. And how fine you look, my boy, your mother would burst with pride if she could see you now. Of course, the first thing you'll do is to go and be photographed."

And with justifiable paternal pride and the keenest delight the manufacturer to His Majesty embraced his son.

When George had at last freed himself, he said:

"Father, this is indeed a surprise. However did you get here?"

The old man, about sixty years of age, of medium height and strongly built, with a broad ruddy face, large grey eyes and thick bushy brows, whose appearance all betokened iron will and energy and great self-confidence, looked at his son with a satisfied glance. "Do you know your father so little, that you thought he would let you be here alone to-day? I wanted to help you to find rooms, but above all I wanted to hear how things were going with you, and to hear everything that people had said to you to-day. Now begin and tell me everything."

George had taken off his helmet and scarf, and changed his military coat for a comfortable loose jacket; then he took one of the cigars which his father offered him, and sank down into a chair.

"Now, my boy, do begin and tell me everything; surely you can talk while you're changing your things. I know you always say, 'One thing at a time,' but I say one can do several things at the same time. Do you think I should have succeeded so well if I had done otherwise? Why, to-day, I had my lunch standing, with my left hand I ate, and with my right I wrote several notes, and at the same time I gave my clerks all kinds of orders and commissions. So now, fire away."

With an expectant expression the manufacturer looked at his son who still remained silent, but at last he said: "Father, it's all happened as I told you it would when you said you had asked for me to be exchanged. It all happened precisely as I said it would, only it was ever so much worse."

The old man got up and looked at his son with wide-open eyes. "Do you mean to say –"

"I mean to say," continued his son, "that they received me in the regiment in such a manner as might have made me not only blush with shame but burn with rage and anger, as in fact I did inwardly. I was, however, able to control the expression of my feelings, as I always can. They treated me to a long discourse, they exhorted me to do my duty, and they kept on rubbing it into me that it was a tremendous honour to belong to their regiment."

"It certainly is that," his father agreed. "You should have seen how people opened their eyes when I told all our friends and acquaintances that I had been able to get you transferred to the 'Golden Butterflies.' In fact they would not believe it until they saw it in black and white. I assure you, my boy, it's not been an easy matter and it's an expensive luxury. Two hundred thousand marks is not a small sum; but I don't grudge the money."

"But, as far as I am concerned, I not only believe – I am convinced – it's money badly laid out. When you wrote to me first of all that you were interesting yourself about my exchange, did I not beg you, as urgently as I could, not to continue your efforts? You laughed at me, and wrote, 'The "Golden Butterflies" will soon know what sort of a man they have in the son of the manufacturer by special appointment to His Majesty, and if they do not know they will soon have to learn it.'"

"And they will learn it, my son, I assure you."

George shook his head. "They will never do that, father, for they will never take the trouble to get to know me. They regard me as an interloper, a stranger. Even to-day I am quite sure that they are only waiting for the moment when they will be able to get rid of me decently. They will watch me closely, they will weigh carefully all that I say, everything I do, until at last they can find some ground for saying to me, 'My dear sir, you are not the right man for such a regiment as ours.' And one fine morning I shall find myself again in a little garrison town."

The old man burst forth – "Oh, oh, we've not got as far as that yet, and before that happens I shall have a word to say, I can tell you. I stand well in the Emperor's favour, and at the appointed hour I shall know how to open my mouth."

George shrugged his shoulders. "Then it will be too late and of no use, and, besides, you would not like the officers to be forced to keep me against their will. I have suffered enough already in

coming here contrary to their wishes, or do you suppose that I should not bitterly resent it that not one single word of welcome was given me, not a single hand was stretched out to me in greeting."

The veins stood out on the old man's forehead. "What do these stuck-up aristocrats mean? What do they pride themselves upon? Simply because they were by chance cradled in an aristocratic family. Is it any merit to them that they have a count or a baron for a father? I can't help laughing at them! If that is all that they can pride themselves upon, then I am, indeed, truly sorry for these stuck-up aristocrats. To be born the son of a noble is surely no merit; but to be, as I am, the son of an inferior official who, through his own energy and diligence, has worked his way up and reached an important position, that, indeed, is a thing to be proud of. And if these people do not understand that, it must be because they will not or cannot, because they are so pig-headed and stupid."

The manufacturer had jumped up, and was striding up and down the room in a rage. George understood his father and knew that when he was in that mood he must give free vent to his fury, and must regain his composure before he was accessible to anybody's reasons. So he quietly let the old man rage, until at last, with a mighty curse, he sank into a chair again.

"Well," he said, "I am all right again now. I can't help thinking, my boy, you look at things in too black a light. One can't altogether blame these fellows for regarding you to a certain extent as an outsider, and if one takes a rational view of things it is quite understandable, that they did not receive you with outstretched arms. These officers do not know you; they know absolutely nothing about you except that you are the son of your father, and as I have not been born with a coronet on my head that's not enough for them. They must, and they will, get to know you yourself. When I consider the matter quietly, and I am in a sober frame of mind now, I must confess that the reception you had is not altogether displeasing to me. Lieutenants are not like schoolgirls who swear eternal friendship in the first five minutes. Why should the 'Golden Butterflies' be beside themselves with joy at the sight of you? Simply because you're a handsome fellow? No, no, my boy. It rests with you to make your own position in the regiment, and that you will make it I am perfectly certain."

"At least I will try, father, and it shall not be my fault if I do not succeed."

"Why ever should you not succeed? Don't begin in that spirit. Hold your head high. Look courageously into the future. Whatever a man bestirs himself eagerly to get can be got – and there's no more to be said."

George acquiesced. "Yes, let us drop the subject; the future alone can decide which of us is right. But there is one thing I should very much like to know, and you did not answer that question in your letters – wasn't it my mother's idea to get me transferred from a line regiment to the Guards?"

The manufacturer laughed complacently. "Well, if you really must know you're right, my boy, in your surmise. You know your mother – she's a treasure, but she would not be a woman if the money, title, and position which men sing of did not turn her head a little. We live in good style nowadays, partly on account of your sister Elsa. We entertain a great deal, and sometimes it was not very pleasant for your mother when she was asked where you were, to have to admit that you were stationed in some miserable little place with a second-rate regiment. Of course, no one actually said anything, but your mother read quite clearly in their faces – 'You see there are still some doors that money will not open.' That naturally vexed and annoyed your mother and wounded her vanity; she has only one son you must remember, and in her opinion the best is not good enough for him. She dinned this so constantly in my ears that at last I did what she wanted."

"That is just exactly what I thought," said George. "I can see my mother doing this, how she coaxed you – I know every word that she said. Well, she certainly meant it for my benefit, and now I do hope she is very happy."

The manufacturer burst out laughing. "Happy, my boy? I tell you no words can express the happiness she feels now. She is always dressed nowadays in the best silk dress which was formerly reserved for the grandest occasions."

George could not help laughing, and they went on talking about the mother and sister, who was devotedly loved by her brother, of the home and the factory, until the hour struck, and George remembered that it was high time for him to be going to dinner.

The manufacturer made a wry face. "Can't we dine together? I thought that in honour of this day we might have ordered at a first-class restaurant a dinner which would have aroused the envy of the immortal gods."

"To-day that is quite impossible, father; on the very first day I must under no circumstances be absent from the mess dinner; perhaps to-morrow I may be free."

The old man growled with vexation. "To-morrow is not to-day; however, it can't be helped." And then after a short pause he said: "Can I not dine with you in the mess-room? I thought perhaps I ought to call on your immediate superiors, or, at any rate, upon your colonel."

George was somewhat embarrassed. He was a good son, was proud of his father and greatly loved him, and just because of this he wanted to prevent people seeing anything odd in his manners at dinner; above all he was anxious that his companions should have no occasion to make remarks about anything in his behaviour that displeased them. Besides, he was afraid that his father, whose passionate, quick temper he was only too well aware of, might lose his self-control and make unflattering remarks which could only harm them both. So he said hesitatingly; "I'm afraid that would scarcely do, father; it is an old custom in the army that on the first time an officer dines with his new comrades he is invited by them as a guest, and as such he naturally cannot bring a guest with him."

The old man understood this more easily than George had dared to hope. "Very well, then, I must drink my Rhine wine by myself; we shall see each other again before we go to bed, and then you must tell me everything that happened."

But when George returned about ten o'clock he had nothing much to relate, at least nothing very pleasant. The dinner had been all right; they had, of course, drunk his health, but that was all; the officers' quarters were splendid, and George gave a long account of these until his father at last said "Good-night" to him.

George went up to his room, but he lay awake a long time, and thought over what he had not related to his father. The oldest officer at dinner had bade him welcome briefly, but the words had sounded cold, and George said to himself that he only spoke because he was obliged to, and there was no heartiness in his words. The speech was followed by a cheer, glasses were clinked, and then the affair was over. No one had given him an invitation.

"Why did I not remain where I was? What's going to happen in the future?"

This question kept him awake a long time, and when at last he fell asleep he saw his mother's glad eyes beaming with joy at the distinction which had been given to her son.

CHAPTER III

Among the Aristocracy

The regiment had been back from the manœuvres for five weeks, recruits had been enlisted, and the military and social festivities of the winter season in Berlin had begun. No one had looked forward to the beginning of winter more anxiously than George. Although he had been in the "Golden Butterflies" nearly six months he was still as much a stranger to all his comrades as on the first day, for all his attempts to fraternise with them had been frustrated by their passive resistance. Now that the winter festivities had begun he hoped to get into more friendly relationship with the officers.

To-day, Captain von Warnow, who had an elegant house with beautifully large rooms, was giving a dance, and had invited the whole regiment. Everybody was delighted, for entertainments at the Warnows were quite different from the usual official parties.

The Warnow's niece, Fräulein von Wiedemann, a tall, slender, very beautiful brunette of three-and-twenty, was staying with them, as she did every winter. The young baroness was an acknowledged beauty, and although during the last year or two she had lost some of her charms, she was still considered a very beautiful girl. Her whole air and bearing were distinguished, for she was an aristocrat through and through. The Wiedemanns belonged to a very old family, and she had been strictly brought up in the principles of her class. Her father had been formerly an officer in a Guards regiment, for whom a great military future had been prophesied, but one day he had made a mistake during an inspection of his battalion, and now, as during his military career he had spent all his own limited private means, he lived with his wife and daughter in a small town on a pension of about four thousand marks (£200) a year. His only son was an officer in an important Artillery regiment. Great poverty reigned in the household of the pensioned major: the allowance which his son required to keep up appearances in his regiment swallowed up half his pension, and the other half, in spite of all efforts, was not sufficient to defray the ordinary expenses of living. Consequently the major was up to his ears in debt.

At first he had not troubled himself much about this. Hildegard, his beautiful daughter, would one day make a great match, and would then pay all his debts. But the years passed, and the splendid match did not come off. Hildegard would never marry well as long as she remained in a little provincial town; then Frau von Warnow, who was connected with the Wiedemanns, and was very fond of Hildegard, came forward and said she would find a suitable *parti* for her. Five years ago Hildegard had gone to Berlin for her first visit; on all sides she had aroused admiration, their Majesties had noticed her at court festivities, but she was not yet engaged.

Not that suitors were lacking; one after another had endeavoured to win her favour, but each in turn drew back when he heard of her lack of dowry. None of the officers of the Guards – and neither Frau von Warnow nor Hildegard would have looked at anyone else – was rich enough to marry a girl whose marriage portion consisted of her beauty and a whole family plunged in debt. For it was not only the father's debts that a son-in-law would have to pay, but a brother's, for the latter was known as a giddy spendthrift and gambler. Hildegard's father could not in the least understand why after her first winter in Berlin she returned home without a *fiancé*. He had so absolutely reckoned upon a wealthy son-in-law that the non-realisation of his hopes seemed to him like a terrible blow dealt him by Fate, and it was long before he recovered from it. But at last hope had sprung up once again in his heart, although there was really no prospect of anything for either him or his daughter. Hildegard's brother also looked to her for deliverance; it surely must come one day, and he was so deeply in debt that he could only just keep his head above water by opportunely winning something at cards; but that could not go on for long. His rich relatives helped him now and again with £50 or so, but he never dreamed of using this for paying his debts, but usually gambled it away directly he got it. Whenever

he was in a hole he would write to his sister: "Fulfil the hopes that are centred upon you; save us all, and do not be so haughty in your demands. It is true that the idea of a middle-class brother-in-law, who has probably never worn dress clothes and has moved in a quite different social circle, is abhorrent to me, still I'd put up with him if only he had money and was willing to help us."

Hildegarde scarcely ever read these letters nowadays, for she knew beforehand what they contained. Her father was in the habit of saying exactly the same things when a bill came to the house, or her mother asked for money for housekeeping, or the servants demanded their wages. He always said on such occasions:

"Put away your aristocratic pride until you have got a husband. There are any number of rich middle-class men who would be only too delighted to get for their miserable money a beautiful and aristocratic wife who would introduce them into Society and give them a good social position. When you have got your husband then you can be as aristocratic as ever you like, in order to impress him, and the more you show what a sacrifice you made when you accepted him, the more he will love and honour you."

Hildegarde could scarcely restrain herself from crying out: "What am I to do? I can hardly do anything more than allow myself to be exhibited and admired. I can't very well actually offer myself to the men. I am often so terribly ashamed that I scarcely know how to endure such a life, and what you say seems horrible to me. I cannot understand how you can talk to me in this way; you ought to have more respect for your daughter than to do so. It's money, money, everlasting money; and to pay your debts I am to sell myself to the first best man who offers sufficient for my body."

On such occasions violent speeches were on the tip of her tongue, but she always restrained herself, for she knew what a terrible struggle her father had, and how he lay awake for hours racking his brains how to make both ends meet. When he had first left the army he had delayed trying to get an appointment, for then he considered it beneath his dignity to become the agent of an insurance company or something of the sort; now it was too late, and he was not young enough to get work. To the end of his life he was condemned to lead this miserable existence of an officer who had been pensioned early: there was neither career nor money for him. His wife suffered almost more than he did; she was an elegant, distinguished-looking woman, who longed to be back in Berlin and to share in the magnificent entertainments where she had been so much admired. A violent dispute had taken place between her and her husband when he retired to the provincial town; she would deny herself, she would put up with all kinds of deprivations, but she longed to breathe again the air she had formerly enjoyed. "Only wait a year or so until Hildegarde is married, and then we will go back again to Berlin," her husband had said to her again and again. And at last she had given in. At first she had firmly resolved to live very economically in the little town, but by degrees she was again the distinguished and elegant woman of society who could not alter her mode of living and her *toilettes*. She spoke to her daughter continually of her prospective marriage, and there were hours when she did not scruple to reproach her child violently: "How is it that other young girls, who are not nearly so beautiful and elegant as you, get married? You must be either very stand-offish or you must make it too apparent that you want to get married. Both attitudes are unsuitable."

Hildegarde suffered terribly from the speeches and all the family circumstances, but she suffered even more on account of the visits to her relatives. It is true it was a pleasure to be in a rich household once again, to hear nothing of money worries; but letters from her parents followed her to Berlin with the request that she should borrow money for them from their relatives. Then again the gaieties were quite spoiled for her, because every evening before going to bed her aunt used to say, "Has nothing of importance happened to-day?" And even if her aunt did not actually say this, and tried not to let her see what she felt, Hildegarde noticed that it was no longer a pleasure to her aunt to take her about, for she saw the uselessness of all her efforts, and would have preferred her niece not to have visited her again.

This year Hildegard had determined not to go to Berlin; her pride and her vanity revolted against being a burden to her relatives again, and playing a despicable, yet pitiable, *rôle*. She had often noticed both the contemptuous and the sympathetic glances with which she had been greeted when she paid calls; some people privately joked at the idea of her not having given up thinking about a husband, others, knowing her straitened circumstances, felt sympathy for her.

"Under no circumstances will I go to Berlin this year," she declared to her parents. "I am too proud and too ashamed to exhibit myself again at all the parties, and yet get neither a lover nor a purchaser!"

The dispute lasted all day long, but at last her father, who was threatened with a warrant for distraint on account of a wine bill for five hundred marks, fell on his knees before her and begged her to save him. Then at last her opposition gave way. But she felt so wretched and miserable, so degraded and despondent, that during the long railway journey she constantly wept.

"My dear child, you have never before looked so out of sorts; what is the matter with you?" her aunt had asked her, and she had only been reassured when Hildegard feigned a violent headache. Her aunt breathed more freely, but next morning and the following days Hildegard's looks did not satisfy her, and it was impossible to conceal the fact that she was no longer the blooming young girl that she had been. Her aunt looked at her sympathetically, and more to herself than to her niece she said, "It's high time – high time!"

"Yes, it certainly is," chimed in Hildegard, "for I cannot bear this life any longer. If I do not get engaged this time – and I am convinced I shall *not* – I am going to get a place as a governess or a companion, or something of the sort. This I know – I won't go home again."

"Hildegard!" Frau von Warnow looked with utter astonishment at her niece, who was sitting opposite her. She was very pale, her eyes had dark rings underneath them, there were melancholy, despondent lines round her mouth. "Hildegard, do think what you are saying. You, to take a place. You, a Wiedemann! that is quite impossible; on our account alone it would never do, and you must consider us."

Hildegard did not answer, but her eyes expressed resolution and determination, and Frau von Warnow poured forth her fears to her husband. "Just fancy," she said, "Hildegard is determined that this will be the last time she visits us, and she is capable of carrying out her determination; if she does so, it will be a serious reflection upon us, and people will reproach us with not having given her enough money. They will say, 'How can such rich people as the Warnows allow a near relative to take a situation and earn her own living.' People will think us cold and lacking in all decent feeling, and will say that even if Hildegard could not have stayed at home, the proper place for her was with us."

Captain von Warnow looked indignant, and as a sign of his vexation he thrust out his underlip and twisted and twirled his faultlessly-pointed moustaches. "My dear Clara, pray spare me these matters; settle the affair with Hildegard. I have more important things to think about – in a few days the major will be present at the drill, and, as you know, it may go off all right, but it may *not*."

"Quite so," his wife agreed. He did not perceive the irony of her words.

"Ah! I am glad you see that; then you will understand that at present I am more interested in the success of my men than whether Hildegard accepts a post or not. You understand, don't you?"

His wife quite understood. For a long time her husband had been somewhat tired of acting as guardian to Hildegard. He was very fond of her, but her family got on his nerves; he hated those perpetual begging-letters, but he always gave money, partly out of affection for his niece, partly because he felt he owed it to his position. He could not bear the idea of his cousin, whose ancestors had been distinguished in the Thirty Years' War, being summoned by a tradesman; such a thing was out of the question. He would have much preferred that his wife had never taken upon herself the difficult task of getting Hildegard married, for then he need not have been brought into close connection with her family. He could not help it, but whenever he received a letter from the Wiedemanns he felt

as if he were dealing with something that was not quite clean, and as soon as ever he had read the letter he washed his carefully-looked-after hands with great ceremony.

Frau von Warnow was very much perturbed about Hildegard; she could not possibly be allowed to take a situation; that would compromise them too much: at the same time she did not want her to live with them. There was only one way out of the difficulty; Hildegard must get engaged during the coming season, but the question was – to whom? The night before her entertainment Frau von Warnow lay awake, turning over in her mind as to who should take Hildegard in to dinner, and it was only toward morning that a happy thought occurred to her. It was such a simple one that she could not understand why it had not occurred to her before. Winkler, of course, must marry Hildegard, and at breakfast she disclosed her plan to her niece, who listened to it with indifference; this man or that was just the same to her if she could be rescued from her miserable family circumstances, her wretched poverty, and was not obliged to hear the oft-repeated and monotonous reproaches flung at her head. A quiet, resigned smile played on her finely-cut lips. "So this time the deliverer was called Winkler. I should much like to know what he looks like, though probably to you that is a matter of no importance. Is he nice?"

Frau von Warnow was somewhat embarrassed for a moment. "I don't know him yet."

"And yet you recommend him to me as a husband?" The words breathed irony and bitterness.

Frau von Warnow quickly recovered her presence of mind. "What do you want? He is very rich, his father is said to be a millionaire, he's simply made for you. Have I never spoken to you about him? Didn't I? Well, I suppose I forgot his name. One has as a rule, thank heaven, so little to do with these middle-class persons that one does not trouble to remember their names. Winkler, however, belongs to our regiment, he is in my husband's company; you know Eric's views concerning middle-class officers, but he is obliged to admit that this Winkler performs his duties most satisfactorily, and that probably in the course of a few years he will have won promotion. For Eric to say that is the highest praise. Up to the present, as you can quite understand, he has remained a rank outsider, although he must have been quite six months in the regiment, for social prejudices cannot be cast on one side so quickly. Winkler has a difficult position here; if you became engaged to him everything would be altered in a moment – he would then be distantly connected with us; through you he would belong to one of the most distinguished families, and as your *fiancé* he would not only be invited by the most exclusive people, but – how exactly can I express it? – he would be made quite at home among them."

The last words were uttered with some difficulty by Frau von Warnow, and she was not quite honest in what she said. She knew, indeed, that she herself would never look upon Lieutenant Winkler as a relative, and that all the other aristocratic families would regard the marriage as a *mesalliance*; they would either not receive him at all, or confine themselves to entirely formal intercourse and the exchange of the necessary courtesies. But that was a matter of entire indifference; the important thing was to provide for Hildegard.

Frau von Warnow was silent for a moment. She was quite exhausted by her long speech; then she turned to her niece and said: "Well, what do you think of my plan?"

Hildegard said nothing; what would have been the use of saying, "It is hateful to get engaged to a man in this way; a man whom I do not know, whom I have never seen, and therefore I cannot tell whether I should like him or not." Her aunt was so occupied with her project that she did not notice Hildegard's silence, she did not even wait for her answer, but said, "Of course, therefore, Lieutenant Winkler will take you in to dinner."

"But will it not look odd if I go in to dinner with an officer who has so lately entered the regiment when several of the older men will not be able to take in a lady?"

Frau von Warnow bit her lips with vexation. Hildegard was quite right. She must not allow her project to be too apparent, and after a moment's thought she said:

"Yes, that won't do, certainly. Baron von Masemann must take you in to dinner, and Winkler must sit on the other side of you. As he comes to our house to-day for the first time and belongs to

Eric's company, it will not attract attention if I give him a specially good place at dinner. Moreover, I intend to say a few friendly words to him before all the other guests. Perhaps, even, I shall get Eric to welcome him in a little speech."

But Eric objected. "That's going a little too far. I couldn't justify myself to my comrades if I did that, and I should arouse a violent protest. I cannot avoid asking Winkler to my house as he belongs to the regiment and is an officer in my company; but to toast him – to-day when, with the exception of the servants, he is the only middle-class man in our house – that is out of the question."

Von Warnow was, indeed, absolutely opposed to his wife's plan of betrothing Hildegarde to Lieutenant Winkler.

"Winkler a connection of mine! No, thank you. Later, I suppose, I shall have to be on quite intimate terms with the fellow. It would be far better for Hildegarde not to marry at all than to marry a plebeian."

He walked up and down the room indignantly, and only recovered his composure when his wife, quite against her real feeling in the matter, for she already saw the bridal pair standing at the altar, said:

"You jump to a conclusion too quickly. When that happens we can consider the matter."

The entrance of the servants, who had still many preparations to make for the entertainment, brought the conversation to an end, and it was now quite time to dress. So the husband and wife did not meet again till the first carriage rolled up to the door.

"Wherever is Hildegarde?"

At last she appeared, just as the first guests arrived. She looked charming in her cream robe, though there was a somewhat tired and anxious look upon her face.

Carriage after carriage rolled up to the door, and the spacious reception-rooms were soon filled. All the guests knew one another and were frequent visitors at the Warnows, and conversation was soon in full swing. Most of them had not seen each other during the summer, and there were no end of questions as to where they had been during the holidays. They talked about the prospective gaieties of the season, of the court festivities, the programme of which had just appeared.

Lieutenant Winkler was apparently the last to arrive. He had purposely come late so that he might be introduced to the whole assembly at one and the same moment. He knew scarcely any of the ladies, for only the least important of them had included him in their visiting list. Was it by chance or intentionally that just as he came into the room dead silence reigned? George noticed that the ladies suddenly broke off their conversation and looked at him coldly. For a brief moment he was embarrassed, for even the lady of the house was unknown to him. Which was she? Then Frau von Warnow came towards him, and Lieutenant Winkler took a step forward and kissed her hand.

"You are heartily welcome, Lieutenant Winkler. I am delighted to see you among us."

Everybody heard the words as Frau von Warnow had desired, and so nobody would be astonished later on if she were somewhat specially attentive to him. She exchanged a few words with the lieutenant, and then she introduced him to the ladies. Last of all she turned to her niece.

"Dear Hildegarde, allow me to introduce to you Lieutenant Winkler."

Hildegarde had purposely kept in the background. She had even attempted to avoid the introduction. It was disagreeable to her even to approach a man whom they had just been discussing in such a way that morning, and she could scarcely conceal her embarrassment. George did not observe this. He bowed and went into the corridor to take off his helmet and scarf. Hildegarde breathed more freely. Thank heaven! the first meeting was over, and she made up her mind to devote herself to the man who took her in to dinner and not trouble about Lieutenant Winkler. But when they went into the dining-room and took their places at the table, beautifully decorated with freshly-gathered flowers, Hildegarde saw, only too soon, that during the year in which she had not seen her companion he had not become more amusing or wittier. Baron von Masemann belonged to a very ancient family and was a conscientious officer, but otherwise he was a nonentity. All his efforts were directed towards being

considered the best-mannered man among a set of well-mannered men, and this was a somewhat difficult task in a regiment that numbered counts and barons. Thus he felt it behoved him, by his whole behaviour and bearing not to abrogate his dignity in the slightest degree. He was haughty and reserved because he considered this to be well bred, and he spoke little, for he thought an aristocrat should speak little but observe much. So now at the dinner-table he merely inquired of his companion in the politest possible manner how she had been during the long period when he had not had the pleasure of seeing her. He asked her how long she meant to stay in Berlin, and when he had received this information, which did not in the least interest him, he considered he had done his duty. He remained silent, and when Hildegarde tried to entertain her companion he listened with an artificial air of interest, and as a sign that he was paying attention to her he now and again threw in a "Yes" or "No," or other equally striking remarks.

"Baroness, would you be so good as to pass the sauce-tureen?"

Hildegarde, with an "Excuse me," turned to her right and took the bowl from George to pass it to her neighbour on the left.

"May I trouble you again?" Once more she turned to the right and looked at George for the first time; until now she had studiously avoided him, and she was astonished at the intelligent expression and the seriousness of character which his eyes revealed; there was nothing of the Guardsman about him, for their only ambition was to appear *blasé* and amusing. Another thing about him pleased her: that was the look of genuine admiration and respect with which he regarded her. She noticed that he was attracted to her, and that her beauty made a deep impression upon him; she was extremely pleased to find that, unlike most young lieutenants, he had not begun by paying violent court to her, and acting the part of the irresistible male who has only to use his eyes to attract every girl to him.

"Appearances may be deceptive, of course," thought Hildegarde, "but I have picked up a good deal of knowledge of human nature during the last few years, and if I am not mistaken this is a good and sensible man." She suddenly became desirous of talking to him. Apparently he had not the courage to address her, perhaps he did not know what to say to her a complete stranger, so she must begin the conversation. It occurred to her that she might try and win the young officer's heart, and also his money, so that at last she might rescue her parents and brother from their dire poverty.

A crimson flush mounted to her cheeks, and she bent low over the plate so that he might not observe it. Lieutenant Winkler misinterpreted her embarrassment and said frankly: "I beg your pardon, if my glances have perturbed you in any way. As excuse I can only say that never before have I seen so much beauty and grace united in one person; I had no intention of making you feel uncomfortable."

The words sounded so frank and honourable; but far from having the desired effect, they produced just the contrary feeling; once again the blood rushed to her cheeks, for she felt she was playing a poor part towards this young officer. At last she recovered her composure, and with an attempt at badinage, she said: "What, you begin to pay compliments before the champagne comes! still, one can't help liking them when they are expressed so pleasantly."

"I am so glad that you are not angry with me," was his reply.

And now that the ice was once broken they began to chatter to each other. George possessed the gift of conversation to a high degree as Hildegarde soon noticed; he had a very pleasant voice, and this added to her pleasure in listening to him. From every word that he spoke she could see that he was a thoroughly cultivated man, who had studied much and took an interest in a great many subjects. In knowledge and general intelligence he was certainly far superior to his companions. "If I had not gone into the army I should have studied political economy," he said in the course of conversation. "My father has a large manufactory and employs countless workmen; he is unceasingly occupied in trying to improve their social and material position; he sees that they have cheap and good dwellings; he has built libraries, given play-grounds and open-air spaces for the children; in short, he has done all that was possible to improve their condition. Of course, my father has talked to me about all these

things; he gave me all sorts of books to read, and explained what I could not understand. As I said to you, if I had not gone into the army I should have interested myself in the social question."

"Why did you go into the army, and are you satisfied with your career?"

He answered her second question only. "I have now been six years in the army, and cannot say with a simple 'Yes' or 'No' whether my military duties will satisfy me permanently. Naturally, I hope and believe they will, but if later I see I have made a mistake, then I shall leave the service, and take over the management of the factory, for my father has given me a completely free hand. Of course, what I do in the future naturally depends upon whether I get promotion in the regiment as you will understand without any further explanations from me."

He skilfully turned the conversation to another subject and told her more about the factory. Hildegard listened with great interest, for everything that she heard was quite new to her. She had not the faintest conception of the life and labour of other people, and until then had never indeed thought about such things. In the circles in which she moved people either lived on their money or regarded work more or less from the point of view of suitability to a person's birth, or they lived as *grand seigneurs* in poor circumstances, and regarded it as beneath their dignity to work for money.

The time passed very quickly; Hildegard confined her attentions to George, and forgot all about Baron von Masemann. The latter made several attempts to address some feeble remarks to her, but when he saw that she went on talking to George he closed his mouth tight. He generally occupied himself at dinner with observing carefully how his younger companions behaved and whether their manners and behaviour at dinner called for any report. This was his speciality, and on account of this he was feared, for there was scarcely any entertainment which did not give him an occasion for rebuking his comrades next day. As he was considered a great authority on etiquette, people were really very grateful for his instructions, but unfortunately he had a terribly sarcastic and ironical way of delivering his words of wisdom, which irritated the younger officers far more than a torrent of abusive words.

Hildegard looked up quite astonished when she suddenly saw that the guests were rising. How often had she not longed for the dinner to end when she had sat by the side of a lieutenant who told her about his stupid recruits or stale stories which had no connection with one another. Now, on the contrary, she was sorry that the dinner was over.

A little dance concluded the entertainment, and it was towards midnight when the guests departed. Scarcely had the last gone when Frau von Warnow embraced her niece warmly. "Hildegard, I am happy. I was continually watching you two at dinner and during the dance. Lieutenant Winkler couldn't take his eyes off you. Mark my words, this time the thing will come off; it was easy to see that the man was infatuated with you. To-morrow I shall write to your father."

These words affected Hildegard like a stream of cold water. For the first time for many a long day she had really enjoyed a party, and during the pleasant conversation she had quite forgotten her parents and her own miserable circumstances; now that the whole thing stood out clearly in her mind she was utterly depressed.

"Remember what I say, Hildegard, in less than three months you will be engaged. If you had always been as amiable and friendly to men as you were to-day to Lieutenant Winkler you would have been married long ago. Well, to-day you played your cards well; Winkler is certainly in love with you."

If Hildegard had received a blow on the forehead she could not have felt it more than these words. During the course of the evening she had completely forgotten her aunt's project with regard to Lieutenant Winkler, and now she was accused of trying to ensnare him, and this insulting insinuation was regarded by her aunt as the highest praise. An indignant answer half rose to her lips, but as usual she restrained herself. She had long ago given up trying to justify herself; her aunt would not have believed her, she would not indeed have understood it.

She was delighted when at last she could go to her own room, where she burst into a flood of passionate tears. She was conscious of having done nothing wrong, and yet she felt as if she would like to sink into the earth for shame.

CHAPTER IV

A Game of Cards

It was some weeks later. The fifth company came on guard at mid-day and George was on garrison duty. He was in an extremely bad temper, for he had just been obliged to give a piece of his mind to a sub-lieutenant, named Nissew, who was a great favourite of Captain von Warnow. The captain was most particular that there should be no swearing while on duty, and he required his subordinates to act as perfect gentlemen. George had long perceived that this was ridiculous; he himself detested blows, ill-treatment and brutality towards inferiors, but on the other hand he knew quite well that at the right moment a few strong words worked wonders. You couldn't manage otherwise in the army; the men indeed expected that now and again a sounding curse should descend on their heads. But the captain was so excessively polite that he indeed would like to have addressed his men as "Herr So-and-so!" The men of course laughed at their superior behind his back, and in George's opinion the company did not work nearly hard enough. The Poles and East Prussians in his former regiment had been far more active and well-drilled soldiers, it seemed to him, than these troops on parade, who were handled with silk gloves. The under officers naturally followed in their captain's footsteps, partly because they agreed with him, but largely from an instinct of self-preservation, for Herr von Warnow ruthlessly got rid of any subordinate who had once earned his anger by cursing or swearing. To George the most disagreeable of all the inferior officers was von Nissew, a one-year service man, who on account of his noble birth was regarded as an *enfant gaté* by the captain, and was later to be made a sergeant-major; he was a time-server of the worst kind, was always faultlessly dressed, and his outward appearance made a very good impression. George did not know how it was, but from the very first day he had taken a dislike to him; he distrusted his cunning grey eyes, and it was extremely unpleasant to him that just this particular officer should be placed in his company, to a certain extent to give him instructions, and to be able to say to him, "Captain von Warnow desires that such and such a thing should be done."

George did not like the way in which he treated his men. Nissew was always almost exaggeratedly polite to his inferiors, yet somehow in his words there sounded a secret threat. George had often noticed how the people trembled before his piercing, scrutinising glance. This very day he had been struck by something; the sub-lieutenant was giving instructions to a man who had on several occasions made a bad appearance on parade duty, apparently with the greatest politeness, but his glance had augured nothing good. When George had turned away he heard the officer whisper to the man, "Before you go on guard come to me. I want to say a word to you, and arouse your sense of honour." The soldier turned pale, and George had thereupon called the officer aside. He knew the meaning of that expression "arouse a feeling of honour," he knew that it was generally accompanied with blows and curses. He said as much to the sub-lieutenant, forbade him to summon the man, and exhorted him earnestly to do nothing that was not allowed. Nissew assumed an utterly astonished and injured expression. How could Lieutenant Winkler think such a thing about him? He had never done anything wrong. Captain von Warnow knew that perfectly well, and therefore he had given him permission, once for all, to call the men to account if they did not do their duty satisfactorily. The sub-lieutenant walked off with a highly-injured expression, and George knew that immediately the captain came he would be rebuked because he had dared to cast doubts on his subordinate.

And so it was. Captain von Warnow saw immediately that something was the matter with his favourite, and asked him what it was. Nissew knew perfectly well that he could only make a complaint of his lieutenant after twenty-four hours had elapsed, if he were not to render himself liable to punishment. So at first he hesitated, but at the direct command of his superior he related what had happened, but he related it in such a way that though it purported to be merely a description, it

was really a complaint of the insult he had just received. Herr von Warnow listened silently, then he said: "I must speak to Lieutenant Winkler." He spoke severely to him. "It has often seemed to me, Lieutenant Winkler, that you are suspicious and distrustful of Sub-Lieutenant Nissew; I can assure you he is one of the best officers in my company. You have only known him for six months. I have known him for three years. He has never given me the slightest occasion to reprimand him, but his zeal and enthusiasm for his military duties will suffer if you are continually worrying him, and it must deeply wound him if you really think him capable of such shameful behaviour, as ill-treatment of the soldiers certainly is. I beg you to consider my words very seriously."

When, therefore, George returned to his own division it was extremely disagreeable to him to have to share duties with Nissew; he saw quite clearly the malicious glance that he now and again gave him on the sly, and yet he had to act as if he saw nothing. He had no desire to rebuke him a second time, and to be rebuked himself a second time; the relations between him and his captain had so far been tolerably pleasant. He did not want to destroy them intentionally. "Whatever does it matter to me?" he said to himself at last; "after all, it is not I who am responsible for the men but the captain, and if he thinks his lieutenant the epitome of perfection it is all right."

He therefore determined not to trouble himself any more about his subordinate, and after a few weeks he discovered that this was the most sensible thing to do. Captain von Warnow had inquired whether he left Nissew alone, and when the latter replied in the affirmative he became quite friendly with George again.

As far as his military duties were concerned, George got on very well; his men had been praised on inspection parade, his drill during the winter had been considered good, and the performance of his duties as an officer had been well spoken of. He was really an excellent officer; his appearance on parade, his personal bearing and his behaviour to his subordinates gave occasion for no adverse criticism; he was strict and honourable, and impartial in his treatment. Thus he soon won the respect of his men, and when one day his orderly fell ill, and the sergeant-major asked who would voluntarily act as Lieutenant Winkler's servant, almost the whole company offered. Even Captain von Warnow was pleased when he heard this, and his men's behaviour filled George with justifiable satisfaction; it was a delightful feeling to him to know that he had been able to win his men's affection to such an extent.

Officially things were going on well with George, but socially he was no better off than on the first day he had entered the regiment. He was obliged to confess himself that he had not advanced one step. It was certainly not his fault. He was not extravagant in his mode of life, he was modest in his behaviour, courteous towards his elders, and from a remark he had heard by chance he knew that his comrades thought highly of him for not being ostentatious with his money, and for "messaging" just as they did.

George had made several attempts and had really exerted himself to try and get to know some of his comrades better, to discover their true character, and find out whether the distant and reserved air that they always wore was a mask, or corresponded to their real nature. In this particular respect he was specially interested in his colleague in the company, Baron von Masemann. Even in intercourse with his contemporaries he acted as if he were at court. An artificial restrained air reigned at meals, so George thought; they talked a good deal, of course, but there was no harmless fun, no unconstrained merriment. George was horribly bored. They only talked court gossip and told pointless stories which could only have interest for the others because they referred to the most aristocratic circles; and as George did not even know the names of most of the families mentioned, the conversation was absolutely uninteresting to him. Not a single serious subject was ever touched upon; George contented himself with the part of listener, and thus as he found little opportunity of joining in the conversation he did not get any more intimate with his comrades.

In the regiment the officers had gradually accepted the unalterable fact that George was to be one of them, but that was all. If they no longer shed tears because he was there, still they could not

pretend they were pleased; they were quite polite to him, but they erected these social barriers which excluded all confidence and intimacy. Thus it came about that George had not a single friend in the regiment. All maintained a certain reserve towards him, more especially his contemporaries, though George had shown himself friendly in all his relations with them. Curiously, the most haughty among them all was the one who attracted him most. This was Lieutenant von Willberg, the one who had burst into tears when he heard of George's transference. He was possessed of an incredible pride, but he had his saner moments, as George called them, and then he was a lovable, happy, delightful creature; his adorable youthful light-heartedness showed itself, and then George quite understood how, in spite of everything, in spite of the warp in his nature, little Willberg was the darling and the pet of the regiment. George did not know how Willberg had felt about his coming into the regiment, and he had often wished to know him better, but so far the opportunity had not yet offered itself.

One day when George came into barracks he found a large company assembled there. Various guests had been invited, comrades from other regiments, mostly Cavalry officers. Of course the guests sat at the upper end of the table with the older officers of the "Golden Butterflies," and it was not without envy that those sitting at the lower end of the table regarded them. Even the Guards-Infantry were impressed by the Hussars and Uhlans, for the Cavalry officers were considered the most distinguished body in the army. Everybody saw how delighted the "Golden Butterflies" were to see their distinguished guests among them. They vied with each other in amiability, and even the elder chiefs and some of the younger staff officers, who were bachelors and daily dined together in the mess-room, made no concealment of the pleasure the visit gave and how honoured they felt. When they all rose from the table to take their coffee and cigars in the smoking-room, the guests were invited to take the large comfortable easy chairs, and the "Golden Butterflies" stood around them in a semi-circle. Each tried to gain the notice of the Cavalry officers and to be very attentive to them. To be invited to dine by the Cavalry Guard was a distinction for which all strove; for only when one had dined with them was one considered quite "tip-top"; the officers of the Guards accepted invitations from allied regiments, but they themselves were excessively careful in the choice of their guests. Little Willberg literally flung himself at their heads. He stood near Baron Gersbach, whose people came from his own district, and played the part of the darling of the regiment, and tried to engage his guests in an interesting conversation. Apparently this did not make the least impression upon the Uhlan, who stretched out his legs, and carelessly smoked one cigar after the other.

But little Willberg was most anxious to impress the Uhlan in some way or other, if not as a pleasant companion then as a clever, sharp-witted fellow, and so he said to him: "How would it be if we had a game of cards?"

They spoke quite openly in the barracks about card-playing. It is true it was forbidden, and indeed at regular intervals the most stringent orders against playing for money were publicly read out, and listened to with that respect which is proper for commands emanating from such high places, but further than this no one troubled about the prohibition. The military authorities knew all about it, but they shut their eyes, and indeed it sometimes happened that the colonels themselves played with their own officers. What could the military authorities do? In a little garrison town it was easy enough to see that an order was carried out, but in a large town it was utterly impossible. The officers would play, and if they were not allowed to play in the barracks or the mess-room, then they would gamble in some club or in another regiment or in their own homes. Whoever means to gamble will find an opportunity. Officially of course, it was said, officers are not allowed to gamble; but one must distinguish between gambling and gambling. If a fellow lost twenty marks it didn't matter to anybody, and if he lost a hundred, what did it matter? And if a man has the misfortune to lose a thousand marks surely he isn't more liable to punishment than if he had only staked twenty? If the military authorities intended to punish everybody who touched a pack of cards, then the number of officers in any one year would be reduced by half. The lieutenants who played would, of course, be punished, and the colonels in whose regiments gambling went on would run the risk of dismissal because they

had not seen that the stringent regulations concerning gambling were carried out. Now, a man who is a colonel naturally wishes to become a general, and he is not likely to risk his military reputation by giving information which he can suppress if he likes.

Little Willberg repeated the question which the Uhlan at first thought it beneath his dignity to answer. At last he looked at him somewhat astonished: "You had better take care, you will lose your money; are you so very rich that you don't mind losing it?"

Willberg slapped his pockets cheekily: "They're quite full to-day, I've just had a remittance."

Willberg could not account for it, but suddenly he had an odd feeling. It had taken a long time to squeeze a thousand marks out of his old father to pay some of his most pressing debts. He had therefore the feeling that it was not quite right to risk any on a game of cards, but he would rather have died than confessed it now. Had he done so he would have for ever blamed himself and made himself supremely ridiculous in the sight of those beautiful patent-leather boots and silver spurs, which were the things that impressed him most in the Uhlan. However, he determined not to risk more than half of his cash; if he lost that, then the affair was over, if he won, then he would reconsider matters.

Baron Gersbach was known as a great gambler, and it was an open secret that it was only through gambling that he managed to keep his head above water. He had long ago spent his inheritance, and did not receive a penny beyond his pay, and yet his pockets were always full of bank-notes. Many people wondered why he was allowed to remain in the army. It was said that he enjoyed the protection of those high in authority. The story went that even his superior officers and men of the highest rank had played with him. Curiously enough he was an excellent officer, and an exceedingly good rider, who had often distinguished himself at the races. He might almost have been called a professional gambler, though he was known to gamble perfectly honourably and straightforwardly. He did not gamble every day, but only from time to time, when he was driven to make a great *coup*, but even then he only touched cards when an inward voice told him: "To-day you will win." If he was not quite sure about this, he could not be induced to join in a game of cards; thus, whenever he played he won, and people were really astonished that he could ever find anyone who was willing to lose his money to the baron. But, of course, each of them hoped that his case would prove the exception, and so again and again men were willing to risk their luck. All those who had not already played with him regarded it as a great distinction to be invited to do so, and indeed anybody who had not played with Baron Gersbach at least once, was considered not quite the thing.

They did not begin to play cards, to a certain extent from politeness, until the staff officers had left the room. One of the majors indeed found it extremely difficult to go, for he was an inveterate gambler and would gladly have stayed behind; everybody was quite aware of this. Still he really owed something to his position; he could not very well win money from his subalterns – at any rate not in barracks – that wouldn't do at all.

Scarcely had they left the room when all constraint was abandoned, and George observed his comrades with considerable astonishment. They had often played cards in his presence, but he had never seen them like this before; it was the first time that they had cast on one side their air of elaborate repose and faultlessly correct behaviour. It seemed as if an evil spirit had taken possession of them, a mad intoxication, the passion for gambling had seized upon them all, they were nervous and excited. They were all asking themselves whether they were going to win or lose, one saw it by the excitement in their eyes, their pale faces, the nervous twitching of their hands.

Only one man was absolutely calm, and that was the Uhlan. With his legs wide apart, he sat leaning back on the sofa, and did not trouble himself in the least degree about the preparations for the game. Whether he was inwardly as calm as he looked, who could say? Outwardly, at any rate, he did not betray the faintest excitement.

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