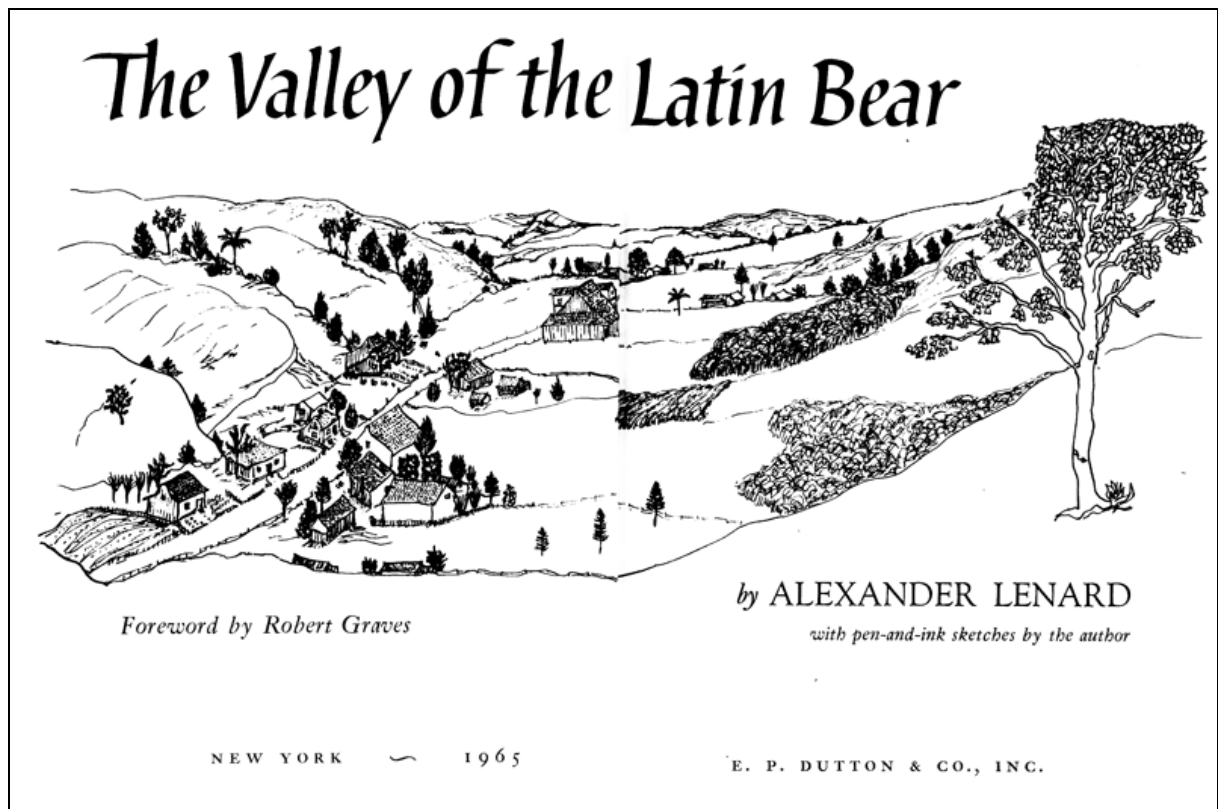


The Valley of the Latin Bear

by **ALEXANDER LENARD**

with pen-and-ink sketches by the author

Foreword by Robert Graves



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Characters and events portrayed in this book represent a cross-section of people and happenings I have known throughout my life in Brazil and elsewhere, up to a few years ago. As reflections of my cumulative experiences, they are, I hope, accurate in essence. For obvious reasons, however, most names of living people and most place names used in the book are fictitious.

FOREWORD

by Robert Graves

Alexander Lenard is Hungarian by birth and, like most educated Hungarians of his generation, a polyglot; writes a very lucid, unaffected English, speaks it without any discernible accent. He has a well-knit body, a quiet laugh, an iron-gray curly beard, and two dedicated professions: medicine and poetry.

Though a perpetually displaced person ever since the close of the First World War - when his family got swept homeless up and down the Balkans - he managed during a brief lull, from 1928 to 1932, to take his medical degree at Vienna. Soon afterward, diagnosing the imminence of a Second World War, he fled to Rome and there lay low until the storm had broken and passed.

He writes of that period:

One thing I knew: ...the dictators enslave their victims with chains of paper. I inscribed my name on no list and in no registry of tenants, took my expired passport to no consulate, and if I ate very little bread, I ate it without a bread-ration card.... I became a medical historian, and sheltered and concealed by library walls, wrote studies on such subjects as Renaissance research on the kidneys and hormone treatment in the ancient world.

After the Allied landings, Dr. Lenard joined the Italian Resistance and, when American troops entered Rome, worked first with the Psychological Warfare Branch of Allied Force Headquarters. He then became Medical Adviser to the U.S. Claims Service and Chief Anthropologist for the U.S. Graves Registration Service ("washing, measuring, and cementing the bones of American dead"). Later he refused a University chair in Hungary ("I foresaw that I should not make a good Communist"), and instead asked the IRO for a ticket to Brazil - though without any better reason than that "it looked large and green on the map."

He has here given us an open-eyed, detailed and gently mocking account of the sequel. Sent as "male nurse" to a lead mine in the Interior, he supplemented his meager pay by teaching English, Latin and mathematics to the French engineers' daughters. After a year of this, he was dismissed for advising his patients: "Get to hell out of this mine, or you'll all die from lead poisoning."

Then he became apothecary and obstetrician at Donna Irma - a village a long way inland from São Paulo, with a complex local patois, an equally complex morality, and very little government control. He has now lived there, elevated to the rank of physician, for thirteen years, and been accepted by its mainly farming population - descendants of Indian aborigines, Portuguese conquerors, African Negro slaves, and more recent Italian, German, Polish and Greek settlers. Close by lies unreclaimed jungle, where primitive Botocudo Indians still rove.

Since his patients have little money and prefer paying in food or services, the story of how he grew rich enough to buy land and build a house of his own is strange to the point of extravagance. It begins at Rome during the war, where he agreed to give Pietro Ferraro, leader of the Venetian Resistance, lessons in conversational English. Ferraro, who spoke only Italian, needed arms from the Allies. Dr. Lenard's sole available textbook was A. A. Milne's nursery classic *Winnie-the-Pooh*; but it proved a great success. Some months later, Ferraro was complimented on his English by the British staff, parachuted back into Venice with a supply of arms - and, having balked the retreating Germans' attempts at sabotage, awarded a gold medal for valor.

Dr. Lenard used the same volume - he still owned no other - at the lead mine, while teaching the French engineers' daughters. When one of them sighed for some equally readable Latin book, he translated parts of *Winnie-the-Pooh* into the rich, flexible, "humanistic" Latin that he had studied so long and lovingly while a medical historian. Completing the task at Donna Irma, some years later, he invested his last few pesos in ordering one hundred copies from a São Paulo printer. Through some inexplicable quirk of fortune, *Winnie ille Pu* was taken up by publishers in Sweden, England and the United States, and everywhere became a best seller. Since then, several other Latinists have exploited the trend with translations of *Peter Rabbit*, *Peter and the Wolf* and *Alice in Wonderland*; but all that I have read lack *Winnie ille Pu*'s audacious wit and stylistic felicities, doubtless because they are written in the wrong sort of Latin.

Both as a physician and a poet - he writes poems in German and Hungarian, but seems at his quintessential best in Latin - Dr. Lenard has felt bound to treat people solely as themselves, rather than as classifiable sociological specimens. And this is what makes *The Valley of the Latin Bear* a real book.

I recommend it wholeheartedly.

To forestall any invidious comparisons between Dr. Alexander Lenard and Dr. Albert Schweitzer, let me add that almost the only peculiar trait shared by these two remarkable Central European jungle-physicians is their love of playing Bach on the local church harmonium.

I

The church is filled and the faithful listen to the sermon. The minister keeps explaining what Advent means and where its significance lies. When he has the impression that the congregation is not listening attentively enough, with his heavy riding boot he kicks the teacher's desk that serves as a pulpit.

The congregation seems to regard listening as the least important part of divine service. What is really important is getting into one's Sunday best and slipping the *Book of German Hymns* under one's arm. What is important is harnessing the horses and driving to church in the farm cart or the green (or dark red) buggy, with the horses beautifully currycombed. What is important is that the little blonde girls shall wear well-ironed skirts and carry new parasols, even if they come barefoot. The divine service is much the same as a review, in the midst of peacetime, is for a soldier: an examination, a demonstration of what one is and what one has - everybody is actor and spectator at the same time.

The little girls in the left front benches whisper and tug their dresses smooth. The little boys in the right front benches hardly know what to do with themselves in their Sunday clothes. The old ladies in the left back benches nod as if they were assenting or falling asleep. The old men in the right back benches cough, clear their throats, and scratch their necks. A long drag at a corn-leaf cigar would be more welcome to them than a long Gospel lesson, but they must keep their dignity. In another quarter of an hour the minister will be discussing more understandable matters: right after the service he is going to sell vegetable seeds.

All of a sudden the pastor's big black boot crashes against the desk and he thunders: "And the Savior came into this wretched and miserable world! Or are you perhaps unaware that this world - this world of technical marvels, this world of our proud century - is filled with poverty and misery? Many of us deliberately close their eyes to the sufferings of their fellow men - and not one of you, for a single day in his life, has ever gone hungry!"



The Valley of Donna Irma

By this time the reader will have lost all confidence in my statements. Little German girls going to church barefoot on Advent Sunday! The minister selling cabbage seeds right before Christmas? His congregation singing from the *Book of German Hymns*, yet not one of them has ever known hunger? That's just too many lies for these few paragraphs!

I humbly apologize. I should first have written, as playwrights do: *Place: the Southern Hemisphere. More specifically, the village of Donna Irma in southern Brazil. Time: shortly before Christmas - in other words, deep summer.*

There are cities like Rome whose names resound all over the globe. Twenty miles from here, only a few postal clerks know where the village of Donna Irma stands. It may be easier to explain if we start this way:

People in Europe shake their heads if one travels to Brazil. "Brazil? That's really the end of the world! Rio de Janeiro? Isn't that where the Negroes invented the samba and the Carnival lasts six months?" While the *Carioca*, or proud citizen of "the world's most beautiful city," smiles sympathetically when the conversation turns to São Paulo. "Yes, in the Interior," he says. "The provinces. Here in Rio we still have the National Library, scientific congresses, the University, and - let's be frank - the whole administration. What they call Brasilia is a cardboard city plastered up for photographers and foreigners. And São Paulo! That's simply the end of the world."

The man from São Paulo, however, though he calls himself a *Paulista*, and not a *Paulinus*, has the pride of a Roman officer guarding the imperial frontier. "São Paulo is a modern, realistic business center," he claims. "We have more industry than the rest of Brazil put together." ("And more immigrants," the European quickly adds.) "There are Italian and German dailies published here," says the *Paulista*, "Hungarian, Lithuanian, and Greek papers. You can live as well here as anywhere. The great artists give concerts here. We have an atomic reactor and the woman tennis champion of the world. But the paved highways stretch barely sixty miles to the east, a hundred and twenty-five to the west, and not very far to the south, and out there - that's the end of the world!"

If you try, however, to reach this end that is so often cited, you never seem to find it.... You may fly some five hundred miles, ride for another hour in a bus, and you are in a small, friendly township named after the German physician Blumenau.

"This is the right place to live," the Blumenauers say. "Especially after having been in Germany, a man enjoys getting home to Blumenau again. In Germany they sell bananas at so much apiece - so much apiece! One single banana costs as much as a whole *cacho* [bunch] does here. Blumenau has a music conservatory, three high schools, hospitals, movies, churches.... But, of course, if you want to go inland and ride that rattling bus for five hours along the whole length of the Itajai River, you will come to the end of the world!"

Strangely enough, however, the people in Münster, at the source of the Itajai - the village that during World War II had the misfortune of being rechristened Tenente Gregorio - consider themselves as residing at the center, not on the outer rim of the world.

"The Central Hotel, the Bear Hotel, Protestant church, Catholic church, hospital, with cemetery nearby, soft-drink factory, saddler, butcher, watchmaker - you've got a nice town to live in here! No pavement? There are street lights and he who is not stewed won't stumble! Of course, if you want to drive for another hour up the mountain, through the forest, and along the Riesel brook - there, yes, there you *will* be right at the end of the world!"

That is where Donna Irma stands. How have I been cast up here?

II

I was born before the First World War. If I may briefly cite Talleyrand, slightly varying his words: "They who did not live before the great revolution know not the sweetness of life." I was still in time to see the bright, full days when everyone could lay his plans a long time ahead.

May I be forgiven for passing off the world's history as my own? Since the July days of 1914, wars have seized me, tossed me about, wounded me, and finally - not long after the Second World War - flung me out to the outermost edge of that cultural circle to which - seized, tossed, and wounded as I am - I nevertheless belong, because (I say so with pride) I have been anointed with the holy oil of printer's ink. I have published books of verse and scholarly works. One of the latter was actually listed in the *Almanach de Gotha* of the Western intellect. Yes, the holy and apostolic Roman Church put my book on the Index.

Wars have decided my life. I remember the day in Budapest when the first one broke out. There was great flag-waving and rejoicing. A round tower of loaves for the soldiers stood on the street corner.... I believe that was the last happy day that mankind was ever to know.

Then the monstrous horror seized us. We thought perhaps we were eluding its cruelty as we traveled, close to my father, first to Serbia and then to the southern Tyrol. Actually, I know now, it was the war that swept us hither and yon. It swept my father to Turkey. Finally one night he returned home, bearded, after an endless trip on foot, bringing us two antique silver egg cups. His return meant the war had ended, but still it swept us down to Fiume, on the Adriatic Sea. The city, too, was dizzy from the wars; it had belonged to Austria, to Hungary, to Croatia; it became an Italian free port, passed to Yugoslavia.... When we were there it was the private kingdom of the poet D'Annunzio, who played Blackshirt there, issued postage stamps bearing his picture, and made speeches.

From Fiume, the storm blew us to Vienna. There I was enrolled in a boarding school founded two centuries before by the Empress Maria Theresa. It offered much patina, titled school-mates, and scanty meals of black-frozen potatoes, thin tea, and clammy black bread. The beautiful school was as unreal as the poet's kingdom. Hunger and cold were the realities of the war that had supposedly ended two years before. I learned German or, more accurately, Austrian, because in those days Hungarian citizens considered that language important. Ever since then I have written poems in German, but even today I can read only Hungarian verse.

We bought a little house not far from Vienna. There, in Klosterneuburg, were things the war had not touched - the River Donau and the silvery gray trees of the River Au. There was an ancient organ with baroque angels whose tone was as true and clear as on its first day.

The postwar period merged gradually into the prewar period, as satiety after luncheon merges into hunger before dinner. In between, however, lies the peaceful hour of teatime. For Europe, those were the years from 1928 to 1932; for me, the first years of my university studies.

I had long vacillated as to whether I should study pure philosophy, philology, or natural sciences. Enrollment in the university was a complicated official process, and I had an acquaintance in the dean's office at the medical school who could quickly expedite such matters. I therefore chose medicine, with the thought that I could study the other disciplines later in the libraries. It was, as I said, the quiet teatime hour when one still made plans.

There were madmen in Europe, about whom one sometimes heard - a Herr Weissenberg in Berlin healed the sick with cottage cheese; a humorless housepainter from Braunau with a comical Charlie Chaplin mustache wanted to establish the world dominion of the Aryans; a woman in Konnesreuth lived on water alone and played the *Passion* every Friday - but all this was unimportant. A Haydn Mass in the Burgkapelle on Sunday morning was important, and after it the pilgrimage through the Museum of Art (one week through the Flemings and Dutch, the next through the early Italians). Dinner in the middle of the day, with Viennese specialties, *Backhendeln* and *Sachertorte*, was important. On Sunday afternoon music on two pianos, the trio sonatas of Bach, the *Forellen* quintet, were important. The theater in the Josephstadt and *The Marriage of Figaro* were important, and *Les Petits Riens* of Mozart in the theater at Schoenbrunn Castle.

Important were one's travels through the various languages and countries - through Sacha Guitry to Paris, through Aldous Huxley to London, through Holberg to Copenhagen. It was correct to have been in Istanbul. On the Acropolis, one ran into a colleague from the dissecting room. One was astonished at the many strange words one heard in Prague.

Such was peacetime. Then the second of the lunatics mentioned above pounded his fist on the table, and the Second World War broke out.

I had been a little too early in seeing it coming; my friends had regarded me as an unrealistic pessimist. "A war would mean the end of Europe," they pointed out. "There's no victor in modern warfare." "With today's weapons," the intelligent citizens opined, "a world war would last three days." And Prime Minister Chamberlain was just able to say quickly - before the first bomb fell - "Peace in our time."

I saw the war coming and accommodated myself to it - I fled to Rome. That is, I thought I had fled. Actually the war had cast me out of my world, had swept me without money or a single acquaintance into a land whose language I did not even know. I made the acquaintance of suffering at the same time that I learned to know Michelangelo and Pirandello; I witnessed for the first time the Colosseum and the vast indifference of my contemporaries.

One thing I knew, however: the dictators enslave their victims with chains of paper. I inscribed my name on no list and in no registry of tenants, took my expired passport to no consulate, and if I ate very little bread, I ate it without a bread-ration card. So as to know nothing more of the horror than a sympathetic contemporary must inevitably know, I read nothing printed since the French Revolution. Thus I became a medical historian, and sheltered and concealed by library walls, wrote studies on such subjects as Renaissance research on the kidneys and hormone treatment in the ancient world.

This temporary way of life became a regular one; the pattern imposed by necessity grew into a habit, and escape into music and painting became more and more essential to me. For a long while I starved in an artist's studio. German shells one day struck the weathercock of the church across the street. Then passive resistance was no longer sufficient, and I joined the ranks of those who then seemed so few, and whose numbers grew so surprisingly after the war.

The Gestapo was sloppy, the military police undependable, and I was not hanged. The Americans came, warily and slowly ... but one very beautiful day they were in Rome. They marched in long columns through the dusk of evening. Thereafter I continued to go hungry, but with the satisfying sense of being able to work in the leaflet section of the Psychological Warfare Branch. I then became official doctor of the United States Claims Service and examined the Italians to whom anything untoward had happened at the hands of drunken drivers or gangsters in the army of occupation. The Army paid them in the year 1948

according to the scale of 1938; it was the only indemnification service in the world that ignored the war. After 1948 I served as chief anthropologist in the United States Graves Registration Service, washing, measuring, and cementing the bones of American dead. They represented that part of the Army which had *not* ignored the war.

In the year 1951 tanks were again off-loaded in the port of Naples. The words “war criminal” were everywhere put in quotation marks. The German generals again went on full pension. It seemed once again to be time to look about in the world.

The Hungarians offered me a university chair in the history of medicine, but I foresaw that I should not make a good Communist. The Americans invited me to Korea, but I had had all the bones I needed in the far more beautiful surroundings of Florence (between the vineyard of Machiavelli and the olive grove of Amerigo Vespucci). Brazil looked big and green on the map. I chose it.

Still in operation at that time was the International Refugee Organization. It loaded old colliers full of miserable Europeans and landed them somewhere. Myself they landed in the bay of Rio de Janeiro, on the Ilha das Flores, the Isle of Flowers. There I sat for ten days waiting for the police to take my fingerprints. The police had no time because it was Carnival. So, hungry, thirsty, dirty, I was obliged to meditate patiently, and I discovered something - I had not eluded the third world war. It had simply cast me up on the coast of Brazil.

From the island I went as “male nurse” to a lead mine on the way to Parana. The epitaphs of the workers who had contracted lead poisoning would illustrate that chapter of my autobiography, if there had been epitaphs on their graves.

A year later I came to São Paulo. A goodhearted colleague took me on as his assistant. I treated varicose veins and translated reports from medical congresses. With the money I earned in that city I bought a tiny apothecary’s business in the Valley of Donna Irma. I firmly believe that in this valley eternal peace thrives and blooms forever.

III

Donna Irma (the town in this happy valley was rechristened Pedro Segundo during the war, but hardly anyone noticed this) is ambitious - it aspires to be the chief city of an administrative district of its own. "Why not?" asks the *escrivão*, "the scrivener," who combines in one person the functions of land registrar, notary, keeper of vital statistics, justice of the peace, and other offices. "We have a Protestant church - with a harmonium - a Catholic chapel and one wall of the church itself finished, a pharmacy, an inn with a room for dancing, a school, a mechanic. Our butcher can also pull and fill teeth. It's not like New Jericho here - that's the end of the world!"

Nothing irritates the New Jericho people more than such statements. For example, there you will find shopkeeper and hog merchant Poppschitz, who has become so much like his merchandise that with a lemon in his mouth he could well be painted as a happy, pink, New Year's suckling pig. Poppschitz's ruddy complexion deepens if anyone calls his village the sticks. "The bus terminal is here," he cries, "and what about the electric lights we have - we don't stop seeing at seven here! My store sells everything you could get in Blumenau! Hats, nails, chamber pots, rheumatism remedy, yard goods, scythes - in fact, everything! And we have Bumm's famous honey-cake factory and bakery here. Bumm's buns! Go on to Itanduva if you like - that really *is* the end of the world!"



But in Itanduva there is still a midwife, and beyond Itanduva, after traversing long valleys and crossing many ridges - both the Germans and the Portuguese call them *serras* - you still meet people everywhere. Hours beyond the last electric bulb there are still houses, huts, and little gardens; there are still trees to offer you a pear.

Only once have I ridden so far. It was a sunny morning. I saw an old German sitting in front of his hut as calmly as if he were in one of those pictures captioned "Sunday in the Country" that one used to see on magazine covers. Though not much younger than he, I felt a schoolboyish urge to pull an old man's leg. "Hey, friend," I asked, reining in my horse, "would you kindly tell me if this is the end of the world?" He seemed neither astonished nor

angry. “*Não, senhor* - no, sir,” he replied placidly and continued in German: “You have to ride another hour or two.”

I thanked him and rode on. The huts really did grow smaller, the trees higher. On the crest of the *serra*, a *caboclo* - a real native, with no grandfather from overseas - pointed down to an endless forest - those hundred square miles of it that are all the white man has left the Botocudo Indians, so that they may die out in picturesque surroundings. “That’s where the *Indios* live,” he said. “*O fim do mundo* - the end of the world!”

Wherever we are, even if we are hanging head over heels in space, even if the sun burns overhead at Christmas, we are always in the center; the end of the world is always far away. It may happen that not all of the objects familiar to us will accompany us on our wanderings. The Gothic churches do not leave Europe. The baroque ones come, glistening with gold leaf, as far as Bahia, the old port in the north. The last library which boasts such learned men as Erasmus of Rotterdam in its catalogue will be found in São Paulo. The last place one can get an icebox repaired is Blumenau. The last bathroom and the last plaster dwarf in a garden are seen in Tenente Gregorio. The very last keyboard instrument is in Donna Irma. Farther into the hinterland there are valleys where the sage may find all his belongings again, but only because - as the Romans said - the wise man always carries them with him. On the long road to the last valleys, the first to lag behind is the weary European - to be more exact, the refugee fleeing from the Second World War and from the events that made it possible. A panicky dread seizes him as soon as he no longer sees asphalt under his feet, and the sentence which sums up all his pride and all his helplessness is: “I can’t live without a bathroom.”

It seems paradoxical that the European, who came to know the deepest depths, the fear of death and hunger, and who has suffered from all the wrongs of civilization, when all the blessings of culture were destroyed, should once more wish to live only among prohibitory signs and guideposts. He wants to go to an office again, to complain about the wretchedness of his superiors and the stupidity of his subordinates. He wants his movies back, and will once again long to live in landscapes that he knows only from pictures and will take good care not to have to live in actually.

In reality this is not at all contradictory. The fact that there were “isms” and hence cataclysms is due merely to that weakness that prevents the European from choosing the primitive life with its boundless freedom. The weakness of the individual produces the herd, or as politicians say, “the masses.” The weak need boots, caps, uniforms, and ranks, because without them they are even weaker. The European of the post-World War I or - what is the same thing - pre-World War II period were so weak that they let themselves be ruled by a couple of unintelligent rowdies - and over here they are so weak that their feet do not carry them beyond the end of the streetcar line.

Is a century - are fifty years - really such a long time? It was only one hundred and twenty years ago that the first German settler set his foot and his bundle upon the soil of Santa Catarina, yet it seems to have happened so long ago that those events sound almost like a fairy tale.

Louis Philippe reigned in France then; he was called the Citizen King and people today remember little about him except that he had a pear-shaped face that cartoonists enjoyed. He decided - so that his name would be mentioned with that of the better-known Napoleon - to have the skeletal remains of the Emperor brought back from St. Helena to Paris and sent his son, the Prince de Joinville, to the far-off island to fetch them back. But the winds defy calculation and St. Helena is small. So it was that the prince’s sailing ship arrived instead in Brazil, which is much bigger. The Emperor of Brazil received him with joy and honors, for in Brazil princes are not driven ashore every day. “But the Emperor Pedro had a lovely young

sister, and the prince fell in love with her and wed her,” as readers of Grimm’s fairy tales will correctly guess. “They lived happily ever after,” we expect, but history relates that the Emperor happened to have no change in the house at that unforgettable moment, so he gave his sister a dowry of twenty-five square miles of virgin forest somewhere where the toucans whistle on the coast of Santa Catarina.

The newlyweds sailed to France - that’s history again - where they arrived just in time for the 1848 revolution. It was a rough year for princes in general; citizens were constructing barricades and climbing them with top hat and shotgun. Soon the surprised prince and princess found themselves *émigrés* in Hamburg.

Before an emigrant can live on what he knows, he has to live on what he has. They had nothing but the twenty-five square miles of wilderness. Fortunately the Hamburg lumber merchants had clearer ideas about Brazil and her trees and made a deal with them. Shortly afterward the first settlers started out to harvest the lumber in the mysterious wood and founded the city of Joinville, a small, very peaceful German township. (Otherwise Germans associate French geographical names only with battlefields.)

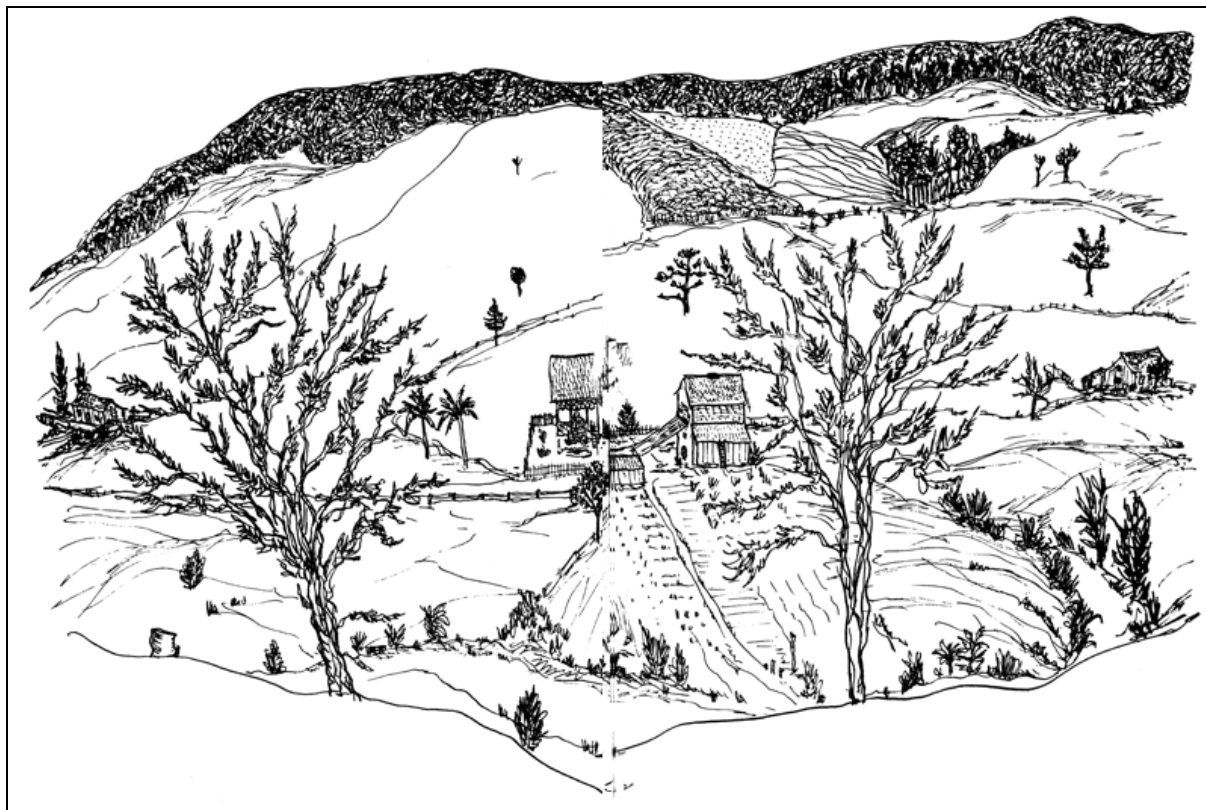
It was just a hundred years ago that Dr. Blumenau read something about the fairy-tale prince and princess and the sturdy timber merchants and decided to lead a group of settlers to Santa Catarina. It was barely fifty years ago that the city of Hamburg itself bought wide tracts of land for large-scale settlement here, that the city of Hammonia (the old name of Hamburg) was founded, that a small railroad was built along the Itajai River, where it still operates locomotives that elsewhere would be treasured in historical museums, and that the colonists - farmers are called colonists here, and a piece of land a *colonia* (colony) - attacked the forest with ax and saw, the virgin soil with spade and hoe. Their first newspaper was called *The Forest Courier*.

They were very different. They deserve to have their story told. Those Americans who pushed westward in their covered wagons, fought the Indians, and founded cities are legendary heroes now. The settlers of Santa Catarina, or *Katharinenser*, as they call themselves, are still waiting for their epic to be written, and they will wait in vain. Mankind is condemned to remember only what has been written, and nothing of these lives was fixed on paper. The first generation fought the forest and has disappeared today under the ferns, like the most remote heroes. The ferns will grow denser, and the settlers’ memory more pale, once the language they spoke has disappeared. Grandchildren do not revere ancestors whose language they do not understand.

There are certain laws of the immigrant’s life that are almost impossible to escape. The first is this - you have to start from scratch. For the immigrant in a city this means that one day or another he will find himself in the street, either because he did not bring enough money with him or because he has exchanged the considerable amount he had for precious experience. For the immigrant on a *colonia* it means, over a much longer course of time, that he will pass years in a shack in a trackless wilderness, that a generation will bleed to death - to death, because there is no doctor near enough to plug a wound and ligate a vessel. The second generation achieves a certain security, and the third generation cautiously returns to town, in order to achieve, still with the support of the *colonia*, the fuller security and bourgeois well-being that are the aim of all revolutionaries and emigrants.

“The first finds death, the second dearth, the third bread.” So is the story of three generations told. Perhaps among all the members of the third, or, today, even the fourth generation, there may be one person who will give more ample information than such mere catch-phrases on the most peaceful of all German colonial adventures.

I doubt if the little that is still preserved by oral tradition will ever be registered in the books. On the way into the wilderness and back out of it a disaster occurred - nothing less than the Second World War. National Socialism visualized, and found, its most enthusiastic followers among the overseas Germans. What Goebbels, from his inexhaustible store of words, chose to broadcast by shortwave was believed. "Germany has again become beautiful," he preached. What was a colonist in the Itajai Valley to know about Dachau, when he was not quite sure where Berlin was? He heard only a voice: the voice of home, the far-off, beloved home of his father and mother ... and so young people among the colonists started marching in boots and shirts and with armbands. The local Quisling - a gentleman with a Brazilian name (so as not to arouse the suspicion of the authorities) and with a perfect copy of Hitler's mustache (so as to be recognized by the most modest backwoodsman) - delivered endless speeches from the pulpit decked with flowers and flags. "If Germany had won the war" - there were plenty of great plans waiting in readiness for that event. Those who before the war had returned "home into the Reich" foresaw a triumphant return to Brazil. As we know, history went a different way. Brazil entered on the side of the democracies, and although she sent but a token force to fight in Italy, it was simple to fight against the Germans at home. Their shops and *colonias* were taken away; the most peaceful old ladies, naturally including those who had fled from Germany precisely because of Hitler and felt safe in the Itajai Valley, were driven from their homes; concentration camps harbored Hitlerite and anti-Hitlerite Germans alike; the settlers' schools were closed and speaking of German was forbidden. The German community in Brazil will never recover from that blow. It is impossible to preserve the old words forever, despite distance and years of prohibition. The young people no longer have any German schools; the books are burned. Concentration camps and book burning were dangerous articles of export, and it is a particular irony of history that Lessing's words were burned in Germany because he had advocated tolerance and in Brazil because he had advocated it in German.



The period of prohibitions interrupted promising developments. Peasants think slowly and do not forget easily. Their respect of authority is deep and inborn. A few still do not know that it is no longer a crime to speak their mother tongue. Moreover, they would hardly describe themselves as “Germans.” Germany is far away. Brazil also seems far off, and if a descendant of the settlers is asked to name the state he belongs to, he will usually reflect a bit and term himself a “*Katharinenser*.”

Katharinenser - what does such a name convey? Words like “Turk” or “Eskimo” evoke at least some more or less meaningful image. But does even a well-defined concept like “Englishman” describe for us the actual individual Briton whom we may someday meet in person?

Like all “Americans,” the *Katharinenser* are an alloy of Europeans who, living in a foreign land, have taken on certain common characteristics. Poles, Greeks, and Frenchmen speak Portuguese together and call themselves “Brazilians.” Their Portuguese, however, would hardly be understood around Lisbon; it sounds more like Swahili. The Portuguese merchants shipped entire Negro tribes from Angola to Brazil (slavery was abolished toward the end of the last century), taught them enough Portuguese so that “they couldn’t pretend not to have understood the orders,” and had their children nursed by Negro women. The “black mother” deserves her statue in São Paulo. She has given Brazilians their accent.

The “Santa Catarina German,” the grandchild of adventurous smallholders from Hunsrück or Schleswig-Holstein, reproduces the Negro sounds perfectly. More than that, the dark nurses rocked the children by shifting their weight from one foot to the other, whistling in a strange way. Now every Brazilian mother, even the most flaxen blonde, would reproach herself for not doing her duty if she stopped rocking and whistling for a single moment. And when the pioneer’s grandchild is put to sleep in the Bantu fashion, he gets, as his first food after his mother’s milk, the staff of life of the Botocudo Indians - the manioc root, known both in Botocudo and in Santa Catarina German as the *aipi*.

Do people change their character by changing their diet? Does the Northerner, after a long sojourn in Rome, become a different person because he has substituted spaghetti for his potatoes? I leave it to those who fathom human minds to determine what characteristics of the Indian mentality are due to this tasty and gastronomically versatile root, and to find out how it has acted upon the white *Katharinenser*. The interested psychologist should take one of the next steamers, as the last two hundred Botocudos are preparing to leave for the happy hunting grounds of a better world....

On the border of the settlement area, once known simply as “the Hansa,” one will also find Italians living. The storms which drove the Prince of Joinville to the shores of Brazil brought many others after him. Historians have not yet been able to agree as to whether the events they describe are determined by logical necessity or whether small incidents decide the fate of a chaotic world. The old Romans were sure there was something called Inevitable Fate, to which even the gods were subject, but that Fors Fortuna could change Fate according to her whims. Meanwhile the eternal gods dictated laws for men, each of whom was *faber fortunae suae* - the smith of his personal happiness ... not a very logical picture, but a true one. The arrival of the Italians could be described in the scientific terms of historical materialism: empty and fertile lands attract the poor and hungry. Those who prefer to believe in the workings of Fors will tell another story. “It all came about,” they will say, “because Dr. Blumenau was as ignorant of geography as the prince was of navigation. He had decided to populate his realm with Germans, and he supposed the Austrian province of Tyrol could furnish him peasants of solid stock. Skiing and hydroelectric power not having been invented, Tyrol was a poor country at that time. Dr. Blumenau wrote to the Imperial Governor in

Innsbruck, asking for settlers. The authorities were glad to oblige. Southern Tyrol, the province of Trento, with all those poor Italians, still belonged to Austria, and the government was pleased to see them emigrate so far away. The Tyroleans Dr. Blumenau had waited for spoke an Italian dialect which recalled the melodious intonation of Venice. He could not send them back - and really it would have been a pity. They knew how to make cheese, they planted rice and grapes - two crops with which the Germans were not familiar. On the other hand they readily bought linen and underwear that the first Saxon weavers produced on their looms. "Logical necessity united the two nationalities," one could say. They got along all right, as there was plenty of space. Even if they wished to quarrel they could not, since each group spoke its own particular brand of Portuguese, which the other mistook for German or Italian. Thanks to the common Latin roots in both languages, the Italians were the quicker to understand the language of the earlier inhabitants, immigrants from the Azores, who represented the Portuguese element at that time. There were families who changed over to Azores-African Portuguese without noticing it. They are still convinced that they understand Italian. Some speak Italian dialects with Portuguese accents, others Portuguese with pure Venetian intonations. Only a few basic words, such as *bambino*, *nonno* (grandfather), *pappa* (food), and the exclamation "*Ostia!*" remained unchanged. A philologist with a tape recorder could register human languages no one has ever imagined.

Languages are living organisms. They are born and die. There are short-lived and long-lived ones. Just like rare species of birds, languages die out in our day. I wonder if there are fifty people left who still speak Manx. Santa Catarina Italian and Santa Catarina German are not yet a hundred years old and they will disappear in about fifty more, preceded by Botocudo, the language no other Indian tribe has ever understood, an expression of human thought unrelated to any other language. It will be a pity for all of them. Santa Catarina German is as rich and amusing as Pennsylvania Dutch, and both are unique.

The combination of two such different idioms as the Lusitanian and the Teutonic yields an interesting phraseology. Portuguese has only one word for both "longing" and "homesickness" - *saudade*. That's understandable. Longing and homesickness are, for a seafaring people, like the east wind and the west wind. Longing drives away, homesickness calls home. Both sentiments lift the anchor. The Santa Catarina settler has renounced the use of different words for the two sensations. "The child is homesick for you," writes the girl to the young man in the Army. The Portuguese sailor on lookout scans the sky and says, "*Tudo azul* - everything is blue, quite blue ... nice weather, good sailing" A patient living at a distance, whose varicose ulcers I treated and whom I had asked to let me know how he was getting on, wrote, "I write you to tell I am satisfied - my leg is quite blue."

How else can people talk together who come from places as far apart as the Bavarian Alps and the Caucasus? Though the first settlers came from Hamburg, before the First World War the Brazilian government had sent its agents as far as Siberia and to the region of the Volga-Germans to recruit immigrants. When the series of catastrophes started in Russia, many a farmer remembered his happy uncle overseas and came to Brazil. People whose religion forbade them to kill, like Mennonites, Jehovah's Witnesses, "God's Own Children," discovered that they must leave the realms of civilization if they wanted to follow their outmoded ideals, and they found Santa Catarina. Hagiographic authorities doubt that a virgin named St. Catherine ever lived in Alexandria; the legend reported by St. Eustachius does not sound convincing enough. There is some danger of Santa Catarina joining St. George on the Vatican's official list of famous saints who never existed - but her state, which has given shelter and a language to so many different well-intentioned believers, will nevertheless preserve her memory.

I feel incapable of analyzing the *Katharinenser* mind, and I am afraid such an analysis would say as little about the mind itself as the properties of hydrogen, oxygen, and carbon atoms do about the properties of the bread they sometimes form. All I can do is to describe the surface.

The inhabitants of the Donna Irma Valley belong to the almost extinct species *Rusticus agricola*, the peasant. (This species has become the tractor-driving farmer in the United States, the *kolkhoz* member in Russia, the porter in the tourist hotel in Switzerland.) He is distrustful to the extreme, because townsfolk such as civil servants, pig merchants, and tapioca buyers are seldom kind to him. Doctors and chemists have thrived on his ignorance. He does not trust the Portuguese, since he does not really understand him, and he has little confidence in the Italian, whom he does not understand at all. Southern German peasants distrust those from the north, even if they meet them in Brazil. At the same time their blind confidence seems almost boundless. They are easy marks for door-to-door salesmen, who unload on them seashore lots which are sea bottom at high tide, or “black snake oil,” a specific against head-, tooth-, and stomach-ache, which also helps women in labor and relieves dandruff and insomnia if rubbed into the scalp. They are timid and shy; they do not dare to enter the shop of the pharmacist who used to be a surgeon in the German Navy and ever since then has been gruff with his patients. They never forget an offense, and shun the place where they suffered it. At the same time they are proud, as few of the inhabitants of our steadily shrinking planet are proud. They belong to the chosen few who never take orders from anybody, who work hard, but only when and where they wish, absolute feudal lords of their tenure. The settler who rides his own horse across his own pastures has the stature of the knight of old ... who did not care for spelling either, and left the catechism to pale monks, but who enjoyed a degree of liberty unknown to later citizens.

Contradictions? Yes, surely. We are all made up of contradictions; we are vagotonic and sympathicotonic, angels and devils at the same time. Why shouldn't the Santa Catarina peasant be both diffident and trusting, a bashful rowdy?

IV

Donna Irma is an idyllic place. No telephone rings to interrupt the person who happens to like to think. The innkeeper acts as a spare-time sheriff and has his own system for preserving the peace. The fines he pockets in cases of brawls ("If you don't pay me now I'll send the papers to the judge and you'll pay twice as much.") are exactly as much as the doctor's fee for stitching and dressing has been. Idyllic are the families with from ten to twenty children. "I don't understand this eleventh pregnancy," I heard a mother often saying. "My husband hasn't been here at all this time. It must have been an aftereffect from the tenth time." It is nice to see that the children are well fed, that there are innumerable black and white cows, regular ducks, "Brazilian ducks" (called "pats" from the Portuguese *pato*, duck), geese, and pigs, lacking nothing but knife and fork in their roasted backs to make the picture suggest deeper peace than all the doves on Picasso paintings and papal coats of arms.

But only one side of the picture is idyllic. If you wish to see the reverse, you need only ask anyone about his neighbors. He certainly will tell you. (Of course, we may have our own opinion of those who ask fathers about their sons, sons about their parents, or sisters and brothers about each other!)

A man of ninety-one had died, one of the old-timers who felled the virgin pines on the side where the Protestant church stands today. His sixty-year-old son came to ask me to write an obituary for the *Weekly Post*. "Tell me about your father," I said. "My father ... yes, he had a long life. And strong - the strength he had! Once while we were playing as children, I happened to throw a neighbor kid's cap into the brook. His mother came over and complained. The spanking ... oh, that spanking! He broke my ribs. I couldn't stand for weeks. Later, after my brother went after him with the ax, he calmed down." Children sometimes take revenge on their parents for what they have had to suffer ... or are they just ungrateful?

They brought old Mother Dahl to me. "It's twenty years she's been suffering from these ulcers of the leg! The pains! The stench!" But the six sons and daughters never wanted to spend anything to have them treated. Now the foul smell had become unbearable. Pus soaked the dressings, flies swarmed around, the air was tainted. Finally it was decided that each son and daughter should pay a share.

The treatment was a success. The rims of the never-before-treated ulcers closed gratefully, the crusts disappeared, the surface cleared. In six more weeks the treatment could have been over - but Mother Dahl stopped coming. Time passed. Finally one day I met one of her sons.

"And your mother? Are the ulcers closed? Why doesn't she come to see me?"

"No more treatments necessary! The ulcers are there, sure, and they are painful enough, but the stench is gone. Our home is a nice, clean place again."

I didn't go into suggestions. Nor could I very well cite the case of that other young man whose mother-in-law was fading away with a cancer of the stomach.

"Shouldn't I at least give her some sleeping pills?"

"You needn't," he answered. "We sleep so well that we don't hear her groaning and moaning at night."

Idyllic and heartless - qualities that are not really contradictory, but that coexist like suspiciousness and gullibility, timidity and pride. Only the masks of the antique stage were always the same; only the stage knows perfect villains and heroes without fear and reproach. Spectrographic analysis has proved beyond any mistake that pure substances do not occur in nature. Each is contained in each. We must admit that every man also contains some of everything. With the worst threats of eternal hell-fire, you cannot prevent them from being mean occasionally, and you must promise eternal bliss in order to get them to provide a pain-deadening pill for a grandmother suffering from cancer.

Even heaven and hell are effective only when they loom in the immediate offing, when the deathbed - the last ship - is steering for the grave. Conscience makes its appearance only when hope fades away. Telling me about the gravedigger, they said he had been a good-for-nothing as long as he lived. But on his deathbed he repented and confessed. One day a young girl had been buried. The mourners had gone home and he had stayed on to close the grave. All of a sudden he heard the girl knocking and crying, "Do open! Where have you shut me up? Let me out!"

But he said to her, "There you lie and there you'll stay. You go to hell!"

And he filled up the grave. Now he saw the fires of hell and felt repentance.

Did God hear his prayers? His mercy is limitless.

But the mercy of man has limits. Another man in the same family died after calling the priest to his deathbed and confessing loudly and clearly the full list of his sins. He received absolution *in articulo mortis*. But his wife, who had been listening at the door, strode into the sickroom right after the padre. All she said was, "Hey, so - with Maria too! And Ilse, that stinking bitch, as well?" And instead of years in purgatory he was punished by blows such as only fists toughened by milking are trained to strike. Which naturally did not stop the sorrowful widow from sobbing heart-rendingly at the grave.

After a short look at the people, let us look at the landscape. From far away, from the perspective of a bird, an airplane, or at any other enchanting distance, only the idyllic features appear. But "only" goes hand in hand with error. It would be just as false to scrutinize the depths of the people's minds while overlooking the surface. There is no use looking at things with the methods of the X-ray specialist. The simplest way seems to me to walk or drive through Donna Irma Valley.

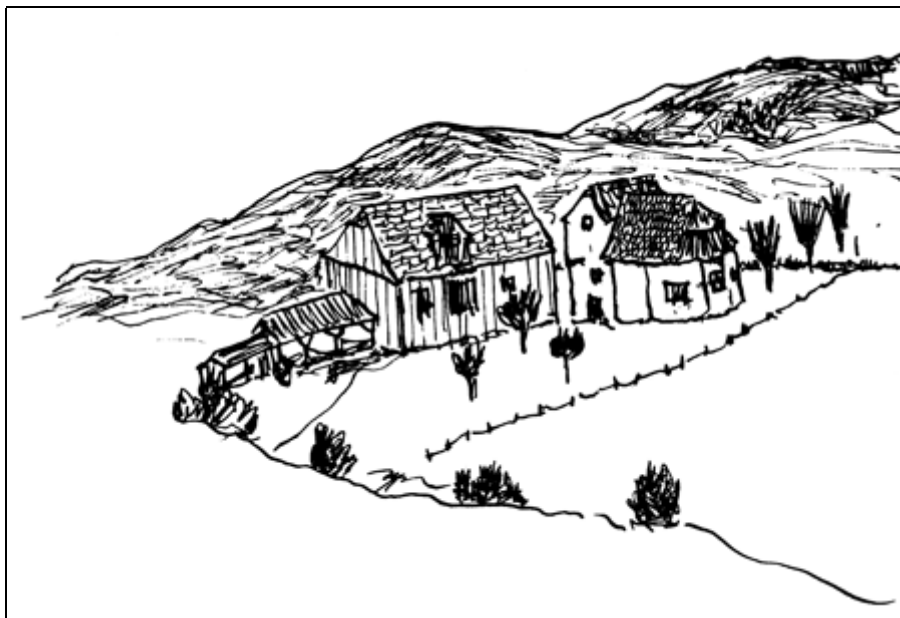
The verb "drive" calls for an explanation. It is not used in its newfangled sense, reminding us of gleaming metal and the smell of gasoline and motor oil. You drive horses, start by saying "Hu!" and brake by pronouncing "Brr!" Acceleration is given by a flick of the whip. The time-honored bonds between man and horse have not yet been severed. There is no colonist who cannot tell special stories about his horses. One animal is "good but slow; he really should always have pulled a hearse. But if another horse ventures into his pasture, he rushes at him and kicks him straight to hell." Another man will tell you that his horse "doesn't get any corn but pulls away as if he got a cribful every day." "I need only look at his horses, and I can tell you what a fellow's like," an old man explains to me with the air of an expert psychologist, and I have availed myself of his method more than once, and with brilliant results.

So as to learn more about the valley, let us start out.... I have to reflect again - start where? Where is the frontier of my realm (my kingdom, or my beat)?... I mean territory that sends me its ailing and the wounded. Where does the valley start to which the wife of the one-time settlement manager gave the otherwise undistinguished name of Irma - of course bearing the title "Donna," like the ladies in Mozart's operas?

The borders of my own territory are best indicated by the plant life. Down in the coastal lowlands bananas wave their broad, light-green leaves, and it would be easy to plant coffee, if the Santa Catarina Germans were not so used to buying it from Brazil and mixing it with all sorts of roasted cereals. Bananas penetrate deeply into the Itajai Valley, but they seem tired and fall back instead of climbing with the road as far as Tenente Gregorio. They cannot compete with the tobacco fields there. But the distinguishing mark of the landscape is the special darker green shade of the acres of manioc. There, where at a curve in the narrow, steeply climbing road the sugar cane remains behind, there where the mountains show their veins of slate, there where the air grows cooler and where the winds in springtime carry the scent of flowering pear trees - there is the line I would call my frontier.

I admire the pioneers, who turned the globe until they found the valley, where a strange country ceases to be completely strange. They knew how much human happiness depends upon weather and winds. I have heard that the Tyroleans who settled in a similar mountain area about six days' journey from here protested to the Minister of Agriculture because he had brought them to a place with so little tropical splendor. "If at least we had bananas!" they complained. But the old gentleman just stroked his legendary white beard and said, "The Tyrolean does not thrive where bananas thrive. The Tyrolean thrives where apples thrive." And right he was.

It is nice to rest in this place for a while. The virgin forest still stands guard on the crest of the *serra*, descending in places into the deep bed of the Riesel Brook. Its breath is cool. The Indian was right in choosing his home. The forest defends him who knows his way in it. There is a sweet smell in the wilderness that civilized men cannot entice into their homes.... This is, of course, no tropical forest. In spite of a few palmito palms (the marrow of which makes a delicious dish), in spite of the big blue butterflies and the rarest orchids, it resembles more the forests that Altdorfer painted. Perhaps similar ones covered the Alpine valleys at the end of the Middle Ages.



There is a shack near the road. A coal-black Negro looks out of its window. "We are still in Brazil," one may think. But when black Pedro calls his little brown daughter he does so in Hamburg German. "Marinha, now, home you come!" He speaks only his mother tongue. No, we are no longer entirely in that boundless country that stretches from Argentina to Guiana. Pedro, whose ancestors were evidently shipped over to Brazil by a slave trader from the interior of Mozambique, regards himself as a brother of those who came aboard a Hamburg-

America Line steamer, and considers the differences unimportant. His white wife heartily agrees with his point of view. She is said to have had some slight misgivings when she felt labor pains for the first time. "The baby won't be black, will he?" she asked the midwife. But a mother's love is blind, and most certainly color-blind, and everything went fine. There were difficulties only at the time when speaking German was forbidden. Brazil suddenly grew fearful of racist propaganda, which could have meant trouble for a country with a big Negro, mulatto, Japanese, and *Indio* population. But Pedro was not willing to give up his language, not even when arrested. "I am a better German than many of those white-skinned fellows," he said, even before the police. Could they really imprison a black native as a dangerous enemy agent? The *delegado*, or sheriff, lest he be ridiculed, let him go.

Pedro's hut stands alone. In this country, "neighborhood" does not mean one house after another, but *colonia* after *colonia*. There may be another house on the next tract of 240,000 square meters, but it won't be nearer. There is enough breathing space and running space; children do not knock against fences. It's quite a walk from Pedro's home to the next house. Before we get there a small road branches off the main one - the road to Inhambu.

Side roads mean temptations. The road to Inhambu seems to me like one to Utopia. (Inhambu is the Indian name of a bird, bigger than a dove and smaller than a chicken, which has almost disappeared. Its meat was too tasty. The settlement keeps its name alive, just as street names in São Paulo preserve the names of exterminated *Indio* tribes. The Portuguese of yore had strange habits: they had no inhibitions about killing off entire tribes, but they would never have changed a geographical name the Indians had invented.)

When I think of a happy Utopia - an anachronistic thought in these times, since the current Utopias tend to show a future bleaker than the present - I imagine it as the side road to Inhambu.

Families live a mile or half a mile apart. They meet, if they feel like it, every month, sometimes every fortnight or every now and then. Only if the housewife feels ill does the neighbor's wife come over to help. The manioc fields are beautiful and there is no doubt that hunger, one of our most faithful companions, has not yet discovered the road to Inhambu. A cart with a good horse could reach the place in about an hour. I would suggest walking, so as to see more.

We feel a particular type of relief when we pass from the tropics into the subtropics and climb up to 1,500 or 2,000 feet altitude. The load upon our shoulders gets lighter, shackles are loosened from around our lungs, and homesickness fades away. And anyone who has had to live in cities filled with identical, expressionless houses enjoys seeing habitations each of which has its own particular face.

A modern psychologist has invented a test: he asks a person to draw a tree and guesses from the picture his character and degree of intelligence. I would recommend a slower but incomparably more efficient test, and I suggest trying my test on the road to Inhambu. Let a person plant as many trees as he likes, let him take care of the trees for about twenty years, gather their fruit, and keep the soil clear around their roots - and I'll tell you what sort of man he is.

Perhaps someday science will recognize the "practical tree test" and a competent psychologist will be able to furnish a "systematic interpretation." I am ready to help with a few hints: dense, high, very dark hedge of mandarin trees: introvert, shy person. Palm trees in front of the house: proud, sure of himself, lover of the exotic. Pear trees around the house: practical sense, little originality. Plane trees: a nonsuperstitious settler - because the superstitious ones are afraid of a tree whose bark peels off every year. It could be the cause of skin diseases,

even leprosy.... Some houses on the way to Inhambu tell even more. Grapevines on a trellis, a kitchen in a building apart: an Italian home. Roses and geraniums: girl in the house.

There are flowers around every house. They are the most telling proof that there is bread enough in the houses. ("You know, where *caboclos* live," somebody explained to me when I arrived, "there are no flowers. A shotgun and a skinny dog, that's what they have.") Many species of flowers such as marigolds, wallflowers, salvias, and fuchsias came from "over there." Many have their own special names, like Busy Lieschen or Proud Heinrich. Others are true-born Brazilians, like the Eleven-o'clock, a very pretty, gay-colored, low-growing flower that opens its cup only in the morning.

Some of the flowers have lost their names on the long journey. "Nice flowers, these, and sweet-smelling, too," a girl says. "I often wonder what they're called." They are carnations.

Flowers are not only a decoration, they are members of the family, and even the proudest, the rose, has accepted a colonist's life. A queen stays a queen; the rose has not lost her crown between the road and the cowshed. The scent of the pale yellow tea rose soothes homesickness. The magic property is not shared by her competitor, the orchid. She always stays strange, is always a secret, a treasure for the collector, the passion of orchid hunters and often the cause of tragedy for them. On the road to Inhambu she seems tamed. The heavy, fleshy leaves wait for the spring - November - on the roof of the pigsty to show their surrealistic shapes. Orchids do their best to justify modern painters.

The village of Inhambu is worth a look. It shows how life starts in the forest.

The first cell of the new organism is the sawmill. The boards generate houses and fill them with furniture. Other boards, by the simple process of being sold, become bread. Then follows the store, which at the same time serves as a hotel for newcomers, restaurant, saloon, and post office (the shopkeeper has to travel to town from time to time). The store sells everything. It acts as a bank, accepting deposits and lending small sums, and also serves as an information center on the prices of agricultural produce. Inhambu may be proud of such an enterprise, which even generates electric power and sells it to privileged neighbors. But there is even more: there is a Protestant church, its tower covered with red shingles, which looks exactly as a child or an honest Saxon master stonemason would imagine a church should look. "It was built with the help of everybody, including the Catholics," one of the villagers told me. "An ox was roasted and eaten at the consecration." Church, sacrifice, banquet are the same concept.

"The Roman Catholics are building their church right now," the citizen tells me. "It should turn out exactly like ours."

"Exactly?" I ask doubtfully. "Really, exactly the same?"

"No, it will be three feet longer," he confesses. There must be some relationship between the inhabitants of Inhambu and the outside world.

Side roads are alluring. It would be tempting indeed to sit down in Inhambu and wait long enough to see what happens, whether it will grow to become a large village, perhaps a town someday, or whether the sawmill is moved away because there are no more trees to be cut into planks, the people follow the sawmill, and the bush - the *mato* - covers the spot again. Towns sprout and decay in Brazil, sometimes with utmost speed. Nobody can be sure that Inhambu will not survive Brasilia, the nation's new cardboard-and-plaster capital, which was built overnight where not even sawmills stood.

But we must proceed to Donna Irma, and the road leads us from the house of the last Negro family to that of the first white family, who are called Braun. Just as Alexander the Great gave cities his name, this region is called "Braun's." "Braun's" is a geographical entity, a spot on the map of Brazil. Braun's is the first big *venda* (*venda*, the Portuguese word for "store," is generally used by the Germans, because the word resembles the German *wende*, which, however, means a "turn"). It is still far from the village, yet one of its centers. Here is the filling station, where you can get gasoline by the barrel. It is also a restaurant and a tourist hotel, even if the tourists, for the time being, are represented by the drivers of lumber trucks stuck in the mud. The dining room is the last step on the way from the pioneer's shack to middle-class comfort. On the first floor one reads a nicely framed quotation, "Everybody receives that share of happiness he is worthy to bear. - Immanuel Kant." Kant, who in his time knew much about geography, and even taught it, would not have expected to find himself quoted at this latitude and at such a distance in time and space (only forms of our perception) from Koenigsberg, or from an extinguished Koenigsberg. Braun, Junior, went to secondary school, teaches Bible classes, and reads the books of the German book club. The house seems a suitable place in which to quote Kant. There is a bridge across the waterfall, which turns the wheels of both the mill and the sawmill. Every settlement starts the same way. There are a few old pine trees in the pasture on the left bank, a rarity where the forests were so cruelly and senselessly cut down in order to plant manioc. Braun, the "*vendist*," has a truck to transport tobacco and manioc flour, and he likes to bring beautiful colored posters and decorate the *venda* with them. "*Visitez Versailles!*" "See the Tower of London!"

Memories are attached to objects. To be at home in a district means to know what happened at this spot and that, to shudder at the right place - there, where death has touched the man-made things. Across the bridge at Braun's a man rode from this life to the eternal, and alcohol gave him a friendly hand. Old Mahnke was thirsty and hard of hearing, but he rode his bicycle by night and was confident - that was a mistake typical of a colonist who used to drive horses - that the two wheels would also find their way to the stable. But steel and rubber accept only the laws of mechanics, which exclude both sense and nonsense, and the bicycle fell into the dammed-up brook. "Here it happened," the passers-by say and point to the spot. "That's life!" the philosophically minded sigh. Others are more prosaic. "Yes, cane spirits, pure *cachaça*! *Cachaça* is a busy gravedigger!" Those who believe in divine providence and eternal laws of existence say, "His hour had struck," and "He for whom the bell tolls must die," and they illustrate their thesis by telling the story of one Tütenmann. "The old tramp - God give him eternal bliss - he wasn't worth a damn, but he wanted to know how many *cachimbos*, those stinking cigars, he was still going to smoke, and so went to that fortuneteller woman and got his palm read. And as he stepped out of that witch's house, her black cow struck him down. He was dead by night. And only because he had been so curious and had wanted to know beforehand!"

Death ... who wouldn't know a story to tell about it? "Death," I was told, "may be mistaken. He sometimes fails to get the one he should!" Such was the grandmother's case.... Everyone just called her Grandma, because she was already a grandmother when she came over, but she was still active, and everyone liked her. She was past fifty ... and who would ever have thought that she had another half century to live! But that's what happened. She outlived her children and many a grandchild, and became one hundred! At one hundred she moved to the home of her great-grandchildren at Indaial. She did not see well any more, she couldn't work in the fields, but she was quite busy at home. She reached a hundred and one, a hundred and two, and there was no doubt death had forgotten her. At the age of a hundred and five she couldn't hear much, only the high-pitched voice of her great-great-granddaughter, who always

accompanied her and always talked to her. When they passed by, the two, the old woman and that little girl, people said, "Just look! there are ninety-nine years between those two!"

And what happened? One day the mother of the child entered the room where the two slept, and touched a corpse. She was dead, she who had not been ill, who had not suffered - the little girl was dead! Death had forgotten the old woman, and now he wanted to catch up. He hurried in the dark, he mistook himself, and he had carried away the soul of the little girl!

Nobody dared to tell Grandma the truth. "Grete's gone to see her aunt," they said. "She will be back soon!" But Grandma didn't hear, or didn't want to hear, and went on crying.... When they buried the child nobody entered the house, nobody told her a word, but she cried and cried: "Grete, oh, my Grete!" And when she wept and cried by night Death found out where she lay, and that he had done mischief - and three days after taking the little girl he came again and fetched her.

"Sure he did," they say. "We can't all die the way old Kranke did!" Old Kranke is named every time people talk about the art of dying. "He sat there at the Silver Wedding of his youngest son and emptied one bottle of *cachaça* after the other. Not his usual three - he looked around for a fifth when he hadn't yet emptied the fourth. And then he calmly fell asleep in his armchair. The trumpets and clarinets and singing couldn't wake him up, and when they wanted to carry him into his bed, they found he was cold."

It is "quite a stretch" from Braun's to the village, and anyone who does not know what "a stretch" means - the corresponding square measure would be "a whole corner" - must just keep walking until he has found out. If he gets impatient - the village and the forest are here fighting for their existence, and sometimes the *mato*, the bush, wins, sometimes the huts and houses, and occasionally the manioc fields - he must ask the children he is certainly going to meet. They are on their way, coming from school or going to it, going to Braun's to buy something, or on their way home.

Springtime is almost eternal here, three hours by plane south of the Tropic of Cancer, and everything that is sown sprouts and thrives. The fair-haired little boys and girls drink milk, they dig their spoons into the daily dish of cooked manioc, their *aipi*, and pour rich brown gravy on it. And even if the spoons number eight or ten, no child rises hungry. It's a small family that counts only six children. A *colonia* can feed twelve of them, and it is a rule as rigid as the law of gravity that there will be as many hungry mouths at the table as there is manioc to feed. I happen to know one man, still fairly young, who in ancient Spain would have already acquired the noble title of *hidalgo*, like our friend Don Quixote, "*por haber tenido siete hijos varones sin interrupción de hembra alguna*" (for having had seven male offspring without interruption of a female) although with the suffix "*de bragueta*" (or "of the codpiece"). Later, as a sort of compensation for the nobility he didn't obtain, he got a baby girl. "She will be able to heal. She will know the charms," the well-disposed say. "She will become a witch," others whisper. Both statements echo the ancient traditional tale of the seven ravens. Tales are light baggage; they cross the ocean with the poor. Facts are forgotten when the people die who knew about them. Tales are timeless and survive the man who told them. "To have seven girls and then a boy means that he will be able to change himself into a wolf by night," I heard very seriously. When Petronius, two thousand years ago, told the same story of the soldier he knew, he was reviving a very old tale indeed.

Children are flowers which sprout at all times of the year. They are born after their elder brothers are married, and there are several uncles in the community who are younger than their nephews. Nineteen children are certainly not common, but I know two mothers who have them. And a mother of sixteen complained, "That isn't enough to take care of a mother when she is in need." One wonders how many are necessary. Even a wealth of children is no

sure safeguard - there can be no real security in a world ruled by luck. To be blessed with too many children means such an incredible amount of work for the wife that to institute some sort of birth-control measure is essential.

"Here's what happened with the Krause family at Rio dos Indios," they told me. "They had twenty-five. That's just the way it went, now half a dozen boys, now half a dozen girls, one after another. But twenty-five is quite a crowd, and the woman said, 'Now it's plenty.' And she put rat poison into the *cachaça* her husband always drank. It threw him up and down so that his bed just cracked ... and gone he was. She really didn't have any more children."

"Didn't they send the woman to prison?" I asked.

"The other children did not allow it. They wanted their mother - all children do. The smallest was still at the breast. They all said their father had put that powder into his bottle himself. Then they let the mother go home again."

Children come into the world every day, all of them lost in dreams, all of them thirsty for the breast, and sucking babies do not care whether their mother is fourteen or fifty-two. And if six children are not enough to pay for the treatment of a mother's leg ulcer, mothers always find room, spoon, and *aipi* for the next child.

"Once upon a time there was a wicked *caboclo* woman in the forest, a real witch she was" - so starts one of the stories I have heard, speaking about children - "and every time she gave birth to a child she made a pyre and burned it." And if the faraway, child-loving reader thinks the police should have intervened, I can only repeat that there is no police, or at least that the innkeeper who serves part-time as *delegado* would not leave his *cachaça* saloon in order to mind some far-off woman's business. "But once" - so the story ends - "the wife of Paul Putz came along - Paul, who with two boards and a piece of string sets broken arms better than all the newfangled doctors with their plaster casts. She took the little brown baby before the flames reached her; she brought her home and kept her as her own." And if anyone doubts, he may look: she is fifteen now, very much of an Indian, and speaks beautiful, pure north German. Her example shows how little light probability can throw on the future. Who would have foretold that a baby on the pyre would one day sit in the Protestant church and answer questions about the life and work of Martin Luther in Sunday school? The future is a mystery, and mother love is hard to calculate. One of the rules I have heard is this: if a wife leaves her husband and children, she always takes the youngest with her.

All children in Santa Catarina have to work. They never see a toy and do not even know the word. The older people do not use words which have no meaning over here, like "postman," "railway car," or "toy," and the words get lost. Living and working are almost as synonymous as living and breathing. The three-year-old carries wood into the kitchen. The eldest child, particularly if a girl, is second in command, a severe and loving surrogate mother. "Rough luck for a woman to have boys first," commented a mother who had had this misfortune. A girl of sixteen need not worry about raising a baby if at ten she has learned how to wash diapers, prepare a baby formula, and hold a child, even if she doesn't learn another thing from the age of sixteen to sixty-six. Children grow as quickly as the weeds between the *aipi* plants. This multitude of various weeds are called *capim* in Portuguese, and the most important word in the Santa Catarina language stems from it. This is the verb "to *capeen*," meaning to cut off or uproot weeds. "To *capeen*" includes keeping the fields in order, destroying the hiding places of snakes, and taking care of the corn and beans. "He who doesn't work should not eat," people say foresightedly in Europe. "He who doesn't *capeen* shall not eat" is the merciless law of the land in Santa Catarina. The dilemma that faces many children during their school-age years - to study or to *capeen*? And almost all of them - no, all of them - decide to fight the battle against the weeds. To *capeen* is to work and be independent of one's fellow

beings. For a mother with ten children, it is the best and only way of passing her spare time. If a wife has energy to spare, she can always weed another acre of *aipi*. Nobody has explained this better to me than young Schulze did when he told me about his first wife.

“She was only twenty. The day before she fell sick she was all right, she had no pains or any trouble. At first we thought it was the flu, but probably it was something else, because the day after she was dead.”

“A real disaster. I am very sorry indeed, Mr. Schulze,” I said.

“Now I’ve got another one and she capeens fine too,” he replied, consoling me.

There would be a great deal to tell about children; they are the most important actors on the human stage. “Are you really married?” I ask the youngster wearing a ring, whom I had treated not so long before, when as a schoolboy he had fallen off his bike.

“Sure I am!”

“And have you got a child too?” I add, jokingly.

He stares at so much ignorance. “But that’s what you start with!”

The highest ambition in terms of wealth would be to leave a *colonia* for each of one’s children. And I wish old and young would sit down too and write about their feelings, which are bound to remain secrets, covered forever by silence. All I know is that they love this valley as one can only love the earth one’s father and oneself have tilled. The young men are alien and sad and suffer from homesickness when they go to Portuguese Brazil. They are no less frightened and helpless if they happen to get to Germany, as did many a boy who was sent there by his father in 1938 “to serve his country.” They came into a country where nobody knew what it meant “to capeen the *aipi*,” where no sugar cane grew, and where it was cold - bitter cold - at Christmas!

“Nobody really knows what *churrasco* is!” one of them told me. “They call it beefsteak. And if you order it in a restaurant you get a steak that’s so small you can see the plate all around it! Coffee is as expensive as if every bean had paid the full fare ... and *cachaça*? Oh God, people there have to get along with no consolation for their sorrows!”

Those who survived came back and swore they would never try it again. Girls very rarely want to see the “outside world.” Maybe they know the way back is much more difficult for them than for the boys.

“To depart, to see the world” is the wish of the hungry, the curious, the dreamer. The grandparents belonged to such groups. There were the hungry ones, like the Hunsrück peasants whom the town clerk wanted to dissuade from departing.

“So you believe the friend pigeon will fly into your open mouths over there?” he asked.

“We don’t believe so,” they replied, “but if she does, we’ll be allowed to eat her.”

There were the curious, who had heard about the Botocudos, about amethysts the size of eggs among the pebbles of the forest brooks, and there were dreamers like members of Jehovah’s Witnesses and the God’s Own Children sect who wanted a place where they could wait undisturbed until a new Jerusalem descended from Heaven. Hunger passes when you have eaten; once you find out that forests are equally green everywhere, you are no long curious, and he who capeens from dawn to dusk, cuts fodder, takes care of the cows, and chops wood ceases to be a dreamer. He stays where he is. Blumenau is almost as far away to him as that Versailles that the poster at Braun’s invites one to visit.

V

Seeing the first houses of Donna Irma I feel, rightly or wrongly, that I am at home. I realize that man is at home where he has his dead, where he has friends he went to school with, and where - that is also a sort of tree test - he plants fruit trees more for his grandchildren than his sons. Yet I feel at home here, because I have entered both houses at the gate - the one at the right of the road and below it, when a baby was born and I had to lend a hand, and the one at the left and high above the road, where a grandmother finished her journey, which she had started at the one-time German island of Samoa in the Pacific, and I had to pave the way to the long sleep with only briefly effective sleeping pills. I do not have the keys to the doors of life, but I am called sometimes to grease their joints.

Holding a newborn child, I always ask what his name will be. The colonists have learned quite a few things from the Brazilians - such as the ceaseless rocking of babies and also their predilection for rare and exotic names. The habit of choosing funny, exotic-sounding names out of calendars, almanacs, and any other books that happen to be at hand stems from the times of slavery and emancipation. The slaveholder enjoyed enormously calling his Negro servants Caesar, Napoleon, Wellington, or Nelson - or if he was fond of music, Mozart or Beethoven - and these became household names. When slaves finally were granted freedom (Brazilians proudly point out that they did not have to fight a war for it) the two or three thousand slaves of a Senhor Silva or Dos Santos simply adopted the name of their former master, and they could hardly be distinguished unless the padre helped at baptism. Thus they were christened Theodosius and Euclides, Callixtus and Apollonius, and the other fine-sounding names of hagiographic encyclopedias. At the time when Brazilian patriotism ran high the names of exterminated Indians began to enrich the list: Yara and Iraçema for girls, Tibiriça and Caramuru for boys. The result is somewhat embarrassing for one who has a certain concept in mind when he speaks the names of Beethoven and Hippocrates. For the colonist they are just names, and he likes them. Thusnelda and Iraçema are sisters. And if the calendar, with its long lists of names, has suffered from misprints - well, then we get new names, and Nebson is not a bit worse than Nelson. Aspirina is a nice little girl; aspirin has always relieved her mother's headaches. The son of the tailor whose shop is across from the church is Rubens. "How did you find that name? After whom is he christened?" I asked the mother.

"The owner of the gas station in Joaçaba," she replied promptly.

One little girl was called Illa. "Why?" I asked.

"When I got her in the hospital," said her mother, "a voice cried in the corridor, 'Illa, Illa.'"

Another girl was named Lomita. "Shouldn't it be Lolita?" I wondered.

"No, Lomita. My husband chose the name. He read a story about a girl called Lomita. She was loyal and brave and served her masters faithfully."

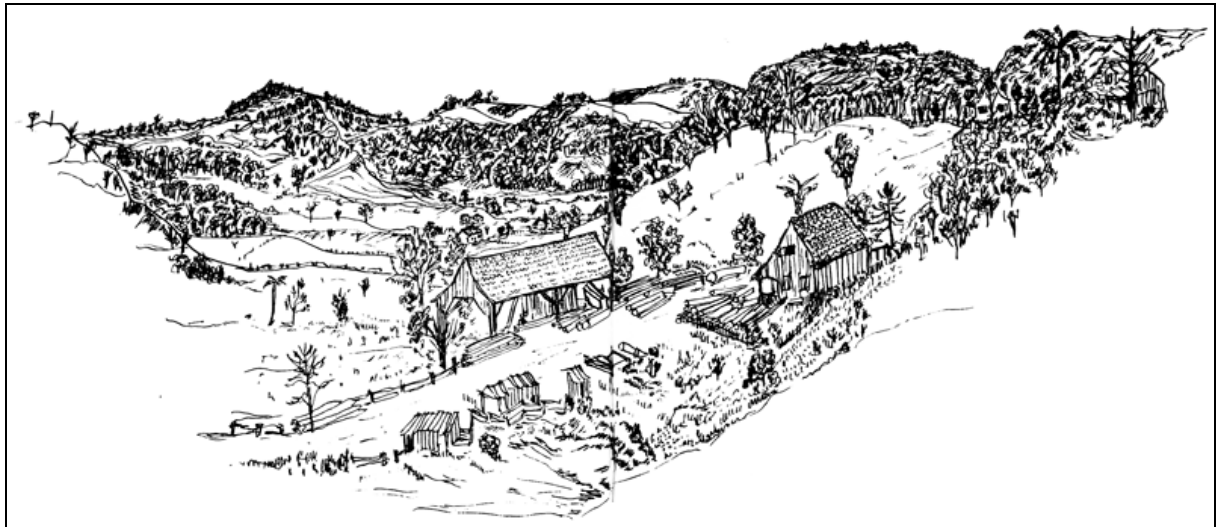
The father - a free colonist - wanted a girl to serve the master faithfully. I really wondered why.

Sometimes the children themselves wonder about their names. "What's your name?" I asked a little girl of seven.

"Isolina."

“Isolina? I never heard that name!”

“It must be Brazilian. In German they call me ‘Mousie.’”



Standing helplessly in view of a finishing life, I try to save at least a few memories. Where did he come from, this owner of memories due to be extinguished? What has he seen? Who does not take a story with him into the grave? The woman in the house at the left was deported from Samoa to Australia after the outbreak of the First World War. The German colonists were simply carried off. A few tried to return after the war, but found nothing of their belongings, and the natives had forgotten all their German. “They knew only one word - *raus* - get out!” So they came to Brazil. Half the family stayed on in Australia, and if they write it’s in English. The other half capeens in Donna Irma. They still use the language of their ancestors, and Dorothea, fair and four, announces my coming with, “*Der olle Dokter ist schon da* - the ol’ doctor has come.”

Perhaps my impressions of the houses are mistaken. I enter them only in dramatic moments. Houses are built for people to enjoy life in, and I enter them to see suffering. The deeper I look, the less idyllic are the pictures. The second house on the right belongs to the butcher, who acts as a dentist in his spare time, or - both descriptions are correct - to the dentist, who improves his strained economic situation by buying, slaughtering, and selling a tired cow once a week. There was a shack behind the house. His uncle lived there. He was blind. “It didn’t bother him much; he moved around, fed the chickens, and helped in the kitchen.” But later on he got an obscure nervous disease, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, a medical rarity. Death, *qui aequo pede pulsat pauperum tabernas regumque turres* - pale death, who walks the huts of the poor and the towers of kings with an equal foot - sometimes grants such expensive ailments to the poor. There he lay, blind, paralyzed, almost unable to turn over on his dried corn shucks. Nobody talked to him. What can you talk to a blind, paralyzed man about? Early one morning he called for his nephew. “He should come; today I die,” he said. When the dentist came, he was already dead. “Strange enough,” said the dentist. “Isn’t it very strange? Blind, he was, and yet he saw Death!”

I have not yet been in the next house. It is the house of Habakuk, the saddler. He has a small truck, to fetch leather from the tannery, and he carries patients to the hospital. My medical activity disturbs his private ambulance-car business and he busily explains to everybody the advantages of hospital treatment. When his wife needed help, he brought her after dark, and he does not wish that people should see me entering his shop. I accept this. I have learned that the actions of *homo oeconomicus* are directed by his economic interests, and those have nothing in common with good and evil. But I know this: Habakuk’s house is a gloomy place.

He belongs to God's Own Children, his father is a preacher, and he reads the Bible. The Bible contains a wealth of stories and everyone chooses the one that suits him best. Habakuk's favorite story is the one about the talents. Critical minds have expressed doubts as to its authenticity. The master, who in the parable represents the Lord, is a crabbed, harsh, pitiless nobleman, and his servant is right in reproaching him with being a hard man, reaping where he has not sown. Were there three or ten servants? Should they trade with the talents left in their care, or lend them at usury? Was the one who did not trade cast into outer darkness, or was the money only taken from him? But Habakuk, unmindful of interpretational differences, drew from the parable the conclusion that he should keep his apprentice on a meager diet, and if his belt gets loose - he is a saddler - he can easily bore a new hole. Even his children are pale and thin. When he passes pedestrians in his car he disregards their thumbs. They wouldn't increase his talent, he is sure. And as to camel and needle, he is confident that nothing is impossible for the Lord.

Habakuk's house belongs to the center of Donna Irma. Here we find the most important enterprises and establishments, such as the auto-repair shop, the frame house of the school custodian, the school. From here you may see the Protestant church and the churchyard behind it.

I regret not to be able to point out more interesting sights. Not so long ago, in the 1950 Holy Year, I acted as a tourist guide for Flemish pilgrims in Rome. I would stand solemnly on the Janiculum Hill, gesture toward the city spread before us, and say, "The row of statues in the distance on the right stands on the Church of St. John, mother and head of all churches. The straight wall at the left is the upper level of the Colosseum. Here at our feet is the Regina Coeli - the Queen of Heaven - prison. Incarcerated there in Mussolini's time were a large part of the present Italian Cabinet and Senate. Ladies and gentlemen, look carefully at that prison. Today it may be the seat of tomorrow's government." But in Donna Irma I can only point out wooden houses, a church, a school. Only a rogue promises more sights than he can produce.

The auto-repair shop in Donna Irma is remarkable because it shows how easy it is to change over from horseshoeing to the welding of axles, or to switch back from automobiles to horses once the gasoline tank goes dry. There is not much difference between heels and wheels. "Repair man" means only a courageous man who has no inhibitions about fussing around with a defective motor until it is capable of rolling downhill as far as the next mechanic, just as "dentist" means a courageous man who is ready to pull a molar, with or without fragments of the jawbone, and "teacher" (if we anticipate and contemplate the school) somebody who has the courage to stand in front of thirty children and teach them questions and answers of whose sense he is completely ignorant. A man without courage would be lost in a faraway valley like this.

I must at once contradict myself in one respect: you do not need courage to become custodian of the schoolhouse. It is enough to marry the limping, moronic sister of the public scrivener. And that is an assignment for a real native, who so far as women are concerned is not interested in the length either of their legs or of their vocabulary.

Aldomiro is the first true representative of Brazil we meet, who hasn't got photographs of ancestors "from over there." It is worthwhile to present him as a representative of his species. That is so much the easier since he is always at home, sitting by preference on his threshold, leaning against the doorpost and smoking tar-colored tobacco in dried corn leaves. He has not yet touched the "capeening hoe," the symbol of toil, and he leaves the broom, symbol of his work and dignity, to his invalid wife, and even she touches it sparingly. Why sweep if the weather is clear and the children come barefoot and bring no dirt into the school? When it really rains, the roads and paths are blocked, so swampy that no child can get through them.

Sweeping is a rare ritual to soothe the pangs of conscience. Aldomiro will retire on full salary before long; then things are going to change and he won't have to send his wife with the broom to school. Meanwhile he sits and smokes.

It may seem that I have already said too much about Aldomiro's plantlike existence. I disagree. He deserves attention as the representative of the master race and because, like all of us, he represents a philosophical outlook. Aldomiro is not able to express his philosophy in writing; the dignity of custodian does not call for the knowledge of written symbols. This fact alone points toward an important phenomenon: the illiterates of Brazil are preserving the forests, and thus protecting wide stretches of land from erosion and drought. Woe, if the 75 per cent of the population who do not require printed paper should suddenly feel a need for it. The forests of Amazonia would not furnish them pulp enough. And what dangerous ideas might be conveyed to those who still live unsicklied by the pale cast of thought!

Aldomiro's philosophy would not be new, anyway. Lao-tse has already noted it. "The wise one occupies himself by doing nothing." The Portuguese formula for earthly bliss is "shadow, cool water, easy-fitting shoes" - "*sombra, agua fria e sapatos folgados*"; the Italian formula is "*dolce far niente*." But nobody has approached this ideal so closely as the happy inhabitants of this country. Here comes no winter to judge grasshoppers and ants. The *caboclo*, whose ancestry comprises anything from Indian chieftains to Spanish monks, Portuguese sapphire hunters and Polish immigrants, lives in a shack. The only furniture is a small hammock; there the last child sleeps. The others sleep on mats on the floor or, more accurately, on the pure soil of Brazil. Near the house grow four or five dozen coffee shrubs. They furnish enough coffee all year round for mealtimes and for in between. The *caboclo* picks the fallen berries from the ground, cleans and toasts the beans in a pan, and pounds them in a home-carved wooden mortar. There is sugar cane not too far off. The sap is squeezed out and boiled down and yields the best, darkest, healthiest sugar on earth. The *caboclo* has a plot of sweet potatoes. There is no lotus land without them. An afternoon spent in planting them yields enough to eat for six months. The potatoes grow so near the surface that one need only bend down in order to pick them up. It does not take much more trouble to sow half a sack of corn and as many black beans twice a year, and to wait for the resulting crops. Bananas and tree melons thrive even in the *mato* (bush) and yield fruit all the eternal spring.

Chickens propagate for their own amusement and find plenty of berries and insects to make them happy and to put some meat upon their long-legged skeletons. The little pigs are clever. They find worms and roots, and if they get into the sweet potatoes they only grow tastier. Bees give honey.... Why, then - I do not ask it ironically but very sincerely - what would be the good of hurry, the printed word, or worry about tomorrow, which closes the coronaries and makes the blood pressure soar? If the helpless European wants suits and furniture, it's his private tough luck. *Tant pis pour lui*.

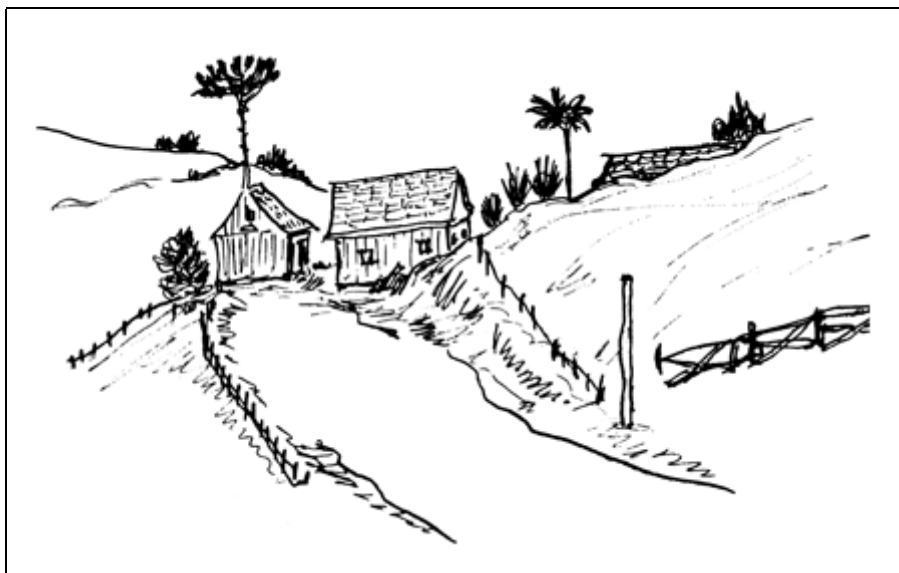
Who would claim that Diogenes was a fool? The *caboclo* alone follows his example. He watches the brook for hours, fishing or not, and if asked when he is going to work will calmly retort, "The day the brook changes direction and water flows uphill." And if a Rockefeller should come - the Alexander of our day - and ask him what he could do for him, the sage would reply, even today, "Get out of the sun, if you don't mind," or (as we are in the tropics) "Come nearer and give me some shadow."

This philosophy does not by any means scorn the joys of life. Quite the contrary. A nice Portuguese formula of love of existence is this: "If death is eternal rest, I prefer to live tired." The smoker on his threshold knows this. Aldomiro is a sage. For lack of words, he expresses it in deeds - and in this sense he is a representative not only of abstract but also of political ideas - because he receives the necessary funds with absolute punctuality.

That an immobile illiterate should be maintained by the state is not so surprising. States have their ideas as to what enterprises they should finance. In Brazil there is ample historical justification: the economic structure of the country, until the very end of the last century, was such that only the slaves worked, while the master's role was that of the consumer. Everybody accepted the idea that there are two types of human beings, one that does the work and a smaller one that enjoys its fruits. Emancipation came step by step, almost painlessly, and soon afterward Europe started her civil wars, and in consequence thereof immigrants streamed in, especially when the United States introduced the quota system. Then the Brazilians recalled the two-type distinction and arranged things so that they would administer, while the immigrant whites, who were used to almost automatic everyday work, paid taxes and gave the natives a chance to practice Lao-tse's philosophy. The administration of Brazil has a high regard for individual freedom and deserves respect in our conscience-regulating, ever more limiting world. It wants nothing from the citizen but his cash, and is even willing to print limitless quantities of that, so as not to overburden the taxpayer. And this money is not used for harmful purposes. It may happen that an aircraft carrier is bought which for lack of planes becomes a floating hotel for admirals, or that jet planes are bought for which there are no airfields, or that a smiling, medal-collecting, prison surgeon builds a capital of white marble, cardboard, and plaster on real estate in the virgin wilderness which he and his family had bought, just because he happens to have been elected president. But the main sums (and that is the reason why we so long and respectfully contemplate our friend Aldomiro) are spent for activities, which the school custodian best exemplifies here in Donna Irma.

"Like master, like man," the proverb says - and we may just as well draw a parallel and say, "Like custodian, like school."

The German colonists started their own school, just as they built their churches and hospitals, as soon as they could. Among the uncounted victims Germany lost at Stalingrad and El Alamein there were the schools of the forest. The older people still remember them. They are able to read, to write, and on Sunday afternoon they browse through a stray copy of an illustrated weekly or calendar. Their children have seen no other school than the Brazilian. So we have to say a few words about it.



The first schools belonged to the Jesuits. They came to communicate the decisions of the Council of Nicaea to the savages. The Indians' interest was surprisingly limited, and special methods had to be developed. The savage was encouraged to ask the question, "Who made the world?" This question could not be at all dangerous, since in itself it already contained its

answer: HE. All other questions were carefully worked out in advance and the missionaries were provided with the answers.

The Jesuits passed from the scene, but their method of dividing all subjects into questions the students would never have asked, and of supplying answers the teacher would never have surmised, lasted on.

It remained because the gentlemen in the Ministry of Public Instruction - which occupies a perfectly air-conditioned skyscraper in Rio - are deeply convinced that the teachers of this country, albeit courageous, have no transmissible knowledge at all, and that they must therefore be given questions and answers without a possible misprint. Moreover, they know that only a small fraction of the children continue beyond second or third grade. All those facts that a citizen should know about the Constitution, the legislative, judicial and executive branches of government, the elections and authorities are taught together with the multiplication table. The basic facts of national history have also to be taught before the pencil is definitely exchanged for the capeening hoe or the corn-leaf cigar. The result of these circumstances is the Brazilian primary school.

By means of a friendly interview I found out how the history of the world was imagined by a native "professor." (Teachers are "professors" in this country.)

"In the beginning God and Christ created the world. It is not quite certain where, but certainly not in Brazil, because Brazil was not yet discovered at that time. Fifteen hundred years later Pedro Alvares Cabral actually discovered Brazil. Here he found another Portuguese, João Ramalho, who had already arrived earlier and had married the daughter of the chieftain of the Guaianazes tribe. Thus the Portuguese already felt very much at home in the land. They hunted Indians and searched for sapphires. They also found plenty of gold. The Brazilians, however, were not happy, because the Portuguese carried off everything. About 1790 a group of heroic Brazilians decided to break the yoke. They were arrested and one, who also happened to be a part-time dentist and therefore was surnamed Tiradentes, was hanged and quartered in Rio de Janeiro, as part of a great feast for the people. Then a general called Napoleão Bonaparte attacked Portugal and the king sailed over here to Rio. He saw at once that this was a splendid country. Later on the Brazilian horsemen drew their swords and cried 'Independence or death!' But they did not die. Pedro I became Emperor of Brazil. His son was Pedro II. Both emperors are still to be seen on the current cruzeiro bills, for Brazil is proud to have been the only empire in South America. Later on the people chased the emperors and tyrants away, freed the slaves, and elected presidents; the president at the time was His Excellency Juscelino Kubitschek de Oliveira. Under his rule Brazil beat the Czechoslovak team and became champion of the world in soccer. Pelè is the best soccer player in the world."

I have the impression that my faraway reader has lost confidence again. Since the times of Dr. Lemuel Gulliver reports about exotic countries have so often been fantastic or exaggerated that my assurances that I am telling the naked truth will meet with little if any credit. Ironical descriptions and overstatements are justified only in cases when they reveal new aspects of already well-known situations. I have no ambitions beyond those of a photographer. I just press the button and leave the rest to lens and plate. I leave it to the reader's imagination to try to realize how the children will see the history of the world through such a short summary, given in Portuguese and full of such - to them - senseless terms as "discovery," "independence," and "empire."

I wonder if the teachers have any idea of their meaning. I am only ready to witness that at one school no one, not even the principal, knew what the Portuguese word "*fidalgo*" meant (readers the world over know that *hidalgo* in Spanish is a nobleman), although the word

appears in the text to be taught. Mathematics reaches its peak with the calculation of the area of a circle, but neither a child nor a teacher could tell me what the word "Greek" meant in the phrase "d, Greek letter." At one point the principal expressed misgivings that the moon might fall down if hit by a rocket, and do considerable damage if it happened to strike the valley, and I learned by means of treacherous questioning that day and night occurred on earth because the earth revolved under the sun, but that above the sun the light was eternal. The first keyboard instrument the teachers had seen was the harmonium that was brought into the church. The fact that identical-looking keys produced such different sounds caused understandable amusement.

The situation appears less paradoxical if we accept the fact that in South America all pyramids are built beginning at the top. The Arab sheik on whose land oil has started to flow buys a Cadillac and waits in it, barefoot, for roads to be built. Elsewhere, if one wants to build a city, the enterprise starts with roads and railways, then come power, water, sewage ... then houses, a hospital, buildings for the administration ... and someday perhaps a cathedral. The new capital, Brasilia, began with the cathedral, and there is no railway to get there. Elsewhere industry produces bicycles, motorcycles, cars, locomotives ... and finally, one day, gets as far as an atomic reactor. There is already an atomic reactor in São Paulo, but bicycles have to be imported. Thus there is a real Academy of Immortals, with green embroidered waistcoats, and academicians wearing dress swords, but there are almost no elementary schools, for lack of teachers. There are too few teachers, because there are virtually no schools for training them. Besides, taxes were invented for tax collectors (see above). There is no possible change.

Children running an hour or two through trails in the forest to get to school have no use for such logical explanations. The blackboard, playing with other children, singing a mysterious song called "national anthem," are a great deal of fun. Most days are free - the principal's birthday, all Protestant, Roman Catholic, state, county, and village holidays (every county has the right to declare three additional holidays a year in addition to the host of regular ones) - and if it really rains in the morning, nobody expects children to risk their health by getting wet. After two or three years most parents keep their children at home. Capeening, taking care of the cattle, and fetching fodder are more useful activities than studying the history of the world and the geography of faraway places like Pernambuco. Regions which cannot be reached in three hours on horseback are of no interest anyway. And if you have to go that far you'll soon find out about the place.

For many, later on, a source of information about past happenings, rules for living, and prophecies for the future is the Bible, or the fragments thereof taught in Sunday school. Locusts, for example, are recognized as having been mentioned in the Bible. Instruction before confirmation in the Protestant church lasts for two years and teaches so many German words that the weekly paper, edited with Nazi overtones in São Paulo, becomes partly understandable. The Old Testament is not quite sufficient to explain the beliefs of the editors, and their short stories are more appreciated than their political comments. Children of Italian stock are denied these latter means of instruction. The priest reads Mass in a language only God is able to understand, and after Mass there is nothing but a dinner, or what could be best described as a mass destruction of dismembered fried chicken.

The best thing that may be said of the schools is that they do not tire out the children. They are not overworked. There are no comic strips, no television, no movies in the valley, and the twelve-year-olds are not cynical, tired, or greedy, and are by no means dissatisfied with their lives. They will not need existentialism in order to exist.

A few steps from the school in Donna Irma - this is instructive - lies the churchyard. It is not easy to find, because it is God's acre, and the Lord does not capen. The ferns win the battle against those who gave them a lifelong fight with hoe and spade. Ferns were fully developed when the ancestors of man were still poor insect-eaters and lived in trees. Probably they will outlive the higher vertebrates. Here in the cemetery the battle between fern and man has already been decided and man has been defeated. Here the ferns show how they annihilate the memory of man. They always have the last word. Grass and bushes help them. A wet summer levels the burial hill of a child; mosses split the slate crosses of the old. Often while a new grave is being dug a skull looks out from the clay. Roots have used the holes where formerly nerves and vessels passed, and imitate them perfectly. People guess whose skull it might have been. Once they found a penknife with the bones and brought it to ninety-year-old Herr Müller. He recognized it immediately and recalled that the owner had been found dead on a Sunday, after a drinking bout, and that they had buried him without a coffin.... It was only the name he had forgotten. As he himself went to sleep under the ferns soon afterward, I have not been able to exhume the forgotten name.

I am fond of the churchyard, so free from pathetic lies. If my writing does not confer a short immortality upon me, an inscription on the grave would not help me either. One who is tired could hardly wish for anything more restful than to have the ferns grow over him. I love the churchyard, too, because I look into it when I go into the church in the afternoon to interrupt the silence with Bach's "48."

So come the great names to Donna Irma: Kant with a quotation at Braun's, Bach with *48 Preludes and Fugues* in the Protestant Church - names not menaced by ferns in the foreseeable future.

The house of God - in contrast to the cathedral in Brasilia - was built only after the people had already been sheltered. To respect the order of things ... is this not the first of all commandments? First you build for the inhabitants of the earth, then for those in Heaven. A secondary aim of building is to show the neighboring community our own achievements. There is a noble rivalry between the church already provided with bells and the one still waiting for them, between the church with a harmonium and the other, in which only the voices try to compete with the choirs of the angels. The acquisition of bells, harmoniums, and carpets calls for two or three church festivals every year, with a real mass sacrifice of edible fowl, from pigeons to geese, and an atmosphere of unity which can only be attained among well-fed people.

We are always ready to believe that the universe should serve mankind and mankind should serve us. I am prone to believe that the church - this quiet and beneficial space whose walls are unusually heavy for Donna Irma and the pointed arches of whose windows rather recall the Gothic - was built for my convenience; also that Bach composed the two volumes of *The Well-Tempered Clavichord* for me, as for one "anxious to learn" or "for the amusement of one already expert in the art." I almost believe that his saying (often quoted ironically), "Playing the organ is easy; you touch the right key at the right moment and the instrument does the rest," is not poking fun at beginners. Once the instrument sings the player becomes a part of it or of the music itself.

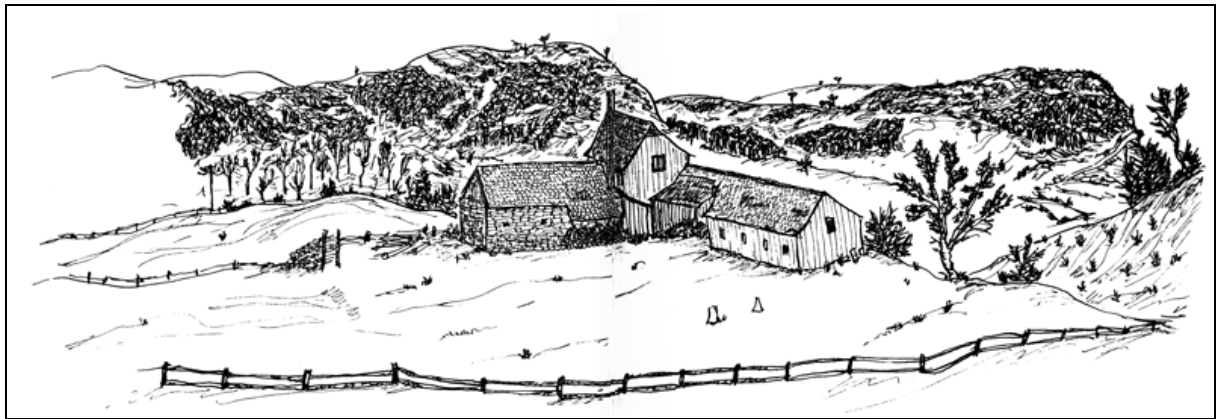
"Every violin is a piece of Europe," a poet once wrote. I wish to add that the happy century of Kant and Bach, Vivaldi and Voltaire, lives in every keyboard instrument. We are at home when we play and when we listen to the polyphonic, occidental music, composed according to the holy rules of harmony and counterpoint. Homesickness fades away in libraries and disappears on the organ bench. I own the *Art of the Fugue* and the *48 Preludes and Fugues*.

So I am - although *parcus deorum cultor et infrequens*¹ - the busiest churchgoer in Donna Irma.

There is no one single reality, but countless realities. They are separated by empty interstellar spaces. The reality of capeening is one, of medicine another, of the well-tempered instruments a third. In the afternoon I flee into this last one and leave my newborn with their diaper rash and my old ladies with their leg ulcers far behind. "Now let trouble swiftly vanish."

I play the well-tempered clavichord, or rather, I should say, I play *at* the well-tempered clavichord. I try out the various registers and stops, and I rejoice that the instrument has good lungs and the organ points have proper sustaining power. I even strike out boldly, attempting pieces with more than three flats and four sharps in their original keys.

Bach thought in only sixteen keys. The piano virtuosos are very happy that he has transposed some of the pieces at half tone, making them more difficult to read. They select these if they want to display their skill, but the Bachian speech rings out better when the music finds its way back to the land of tone from which it came. Only when the possibilities of the four key signatures have been exhausted do the world of F double sharp and C double sharp and the nocturnal atmosphere of B flat minor come as a final aid to the flagging inspiration. I feel at home when I open the instrument - my instrument, I almost wrote - and fill the church of Donna Irma with the eight preludes and fugues as I guide them home to their original keys.



I would love (ambition dies as late as hope) to execute the fugues, especially those of five voices, like motets, *a capella*, with my patients, and to free them of their pianistic features. Perhaps a time will come when mankind turns all its attention to beautiful things (Nostradamus promises for the period after the next world war "*un autre regne de Saturne et siècle d'or*.")) Then, I am sure, they will sing the fugues and dance the cantatas, forgetting their texts.

For the time being we are far from that. As to world history and its sharp-eyed prophet, we are only at the period before the catastrophe "which will involve not only the Christian countries but also those of the Infidels," when birds never before seen will fly through the air whistling "*huy-huy*" - and I am only at the beginning of my attempts to get the ears of Donna Irma used to a type of music which is very different from the one streaming from the radio sets.

During the mid-afternoon intermission sometimes schoolchildren come into the church and listen for a while. A little girl came up one day and asked whether I played from German or Portuguese notes. Another let me show her how to play the C-major scale. Next time she played it herself. She had practiced at home, on the dinner table.

¹ A sparing and infrequent cultivator of gods. - Horace.

VI

If the church is the Embassy of the Heavenly Powers - and I count music among these - the house of the town clerk or scrivener, the *escrivão*, is that of the earthly ones, who themselves also soar rather at a distance. Colonists enter it with the distrustful air of those to whom little good has yet come from the authorities. (Is there anything more useless than sales-tax stamps?)

Escrivão Piminetti belongs, just like his brother-in-law, to the master race. His grandfather was born here. It is his right to harvest where others have sown. But even harvesting should not degenerate into toil and disturb quiet smoking. Neither should it lead one away from the polenta kettle or change the sacred timetable of one's meals. To represent the state should not tire one out, but allow one to harvest cash, the only tranquilizer that does not cause sleepiness. The clerk of the cadastral register in Brazil has chances to turn a profit which do not exist elsewhere, especially if he also records births and deaths and holds the key to the book of vital statistics, which is only a fernless churchyard. Old people who feel death approaching generally make their property over to their children in order to save inheritance taxes. But pale death sometimes comes unannounced. "He only had flu," they say. Or "He ate half a duck all by himself, and keeled over in his chair." Such a simple story might well cost the value of two oxen in taxes. In such cases Piminetti has to resuscitate the dead, command the sun to stand still, to proceed against Heaven's orders and the state's law in a human way, to find a solution - in short, the old man has to make over his property first and die afterward. But we must add that according to Petronius "even Charon, such a mighty man, never does anything for love." To close an eye is work, too, and work has to be paid for and acknowledged with thanks. Happy he who is assisted by tireless Death with his ever sharp scythe!

It is a safe income which is based upon death. Love is scarcely less profitable, especially when registered in the books as "Marriage."

That is generally a late stage of the feelings. Young people meet, somewhere between manioc and the eighteenth year of life. They say to each other something that for the faraway onlooker will remain an eternal secret. They know more about Adam and Eve than all the professors of theology together. All of a sudden they say, "There is a little one on the way." Then both go to Piminetti, they pay and shoot rockets into the air. Piminetti is glad and pretty sure of a birth to be registered every following year. The only mystery is that of the names to be given. Fantasy has no limit, and mythology, bicycle types, calendars, even medicines, furnish the names: Menelaus, Achilles, Edulgunda, Lair, Nair, Lourdes, Salette, Fatima....

Are marriages registered at Piminetti's happier than elsewhere? A dozen children certainly contribute to the unity of the family. A husband and wife fighting weeds do not fight each other. But only the landscape is idyllic, not the inhabitants; the supreme medicine against unhappy marriage is as difficult to find as the one against death. Sometimes disaster appears, like all the others - drought, floods, chicken-plague, and low *aipi* prices. You have to suffer and carry on. "Can't the man get rid of drinking?" the wife asks. "That woman has got it in her head," the husband complains. "I guess it is nerves." It happens that the husband disappears; at other times "the devil gets into the woman." Solutions must be found. Heini's old woman went over to one of Jehovah's Witnesses and returned only three months later. And Heini? Could he just strangle her? They had five children. Chase her away? And continue milking and fetching fodder? He moved into the barn and slept there for the next twenty years. Work continued.

Hog-merchant Suspenders (even Brazilians call him this, without knowing that he got his surname by being one of the last jacketless, suspender-wearing gentlemen) came home unexpectedly and found one of those situations French playwrights have represented so often that I am unable to say anything surprising about it. He bought his wife long pants and a belt which is said to be locked by a special safety mechanism, and taught her driving. Now they drive their hog truck together and return together. The husband in the barn, the wife with the strange clip show that there are many possible ways to overcome embarrassing situations.

And luckily for Piminetti, wedlock is an essential. The example of bachelors shows how badly men fare if they want to do without the ceremony. A lonely man in the forest gets lost. A widower is able to go on; he has thirty or forty years of schooling and knows he must wash dishes and trousers. But a bachelor? There is a man called Goat Peter who lives on top of the *serra*. He could easily have found a girl; he had enough cleared land, plenty of forest acreage, and his flock of goats ... but he had read strange books (this was still before the Second World War) and he wanted to start with twenty girls. He felt sure that race was the dominating factor in human affairs and the bad economic situation of Brazil was due to miscegenation, to Negroes, Indians, and half-Botocudos, and he wanted to start a race-improving enterprise. For this purpose he visited the fathers of nubile girls and declared himself ready to take charge of three or four. In spite of the sympathetic feeling toward the Third Reich and its busily broadcast philosophy, the proposition met with violent opposition, represented at certain places by stones, sticks, and dogs let loose before Goat Peter finished argumentation. Goat Peter had to carry on all by himself, and now lives by killing a goat once a week, cooking it with manioc roots, and eating the contents of the pot, even when heat and days have radically changed its taste. Then he looks for the next goat.

Then there is "The Eternal Bachelor," called "The Eternal" for short. He is fond of order and would not plant his manioc without drawing the lines by means of a long string, but he hates washing dishes. He preferred to buy two dozen plates and all sorts of dishes, used them one after the other, and washed all of them together unless a beneficial rain and a helping wind had washed and dried them. One day his neighbor died - "The Eternal" was already past fifty - and the widow came over to wash the mountain of dishes. Now he has married her and has to take care of her six children! That's the fate of those who do not recognize the order of things and want to stand out from the crowd!

Birth, marriage, death are no problem for Piminetti. He registers them in the Book of Life, he puffs his corn-leaf cigar (thanks to her eight million square kilometers Brazil still has breathable air), and he pockets the dues. Piminetti has a harder time in legal cases - he is the state, as the nearest judge is far away - and court proceedings before him are even more expensive and slower than registration. But it is not easy to decide such cases as the one of the pious settler in Duck Valley! He was a good shepherd; he looked for the lost sheep, he fed the flock, he divided his sheep from the goats ... just as he had read in the Bible. Then the neighbor's dog bit one lamb, so that it went lame. The neighbor wanted to pay. He refused Mammon. "I want my sheep." Well, the neighbor looked for one of the same age, the same weight; he bought it and brought it. The pious man refused. It was black! Black as the ravens on the shoulders of witches, black as disaster! He rushed to seek justice at Piminetti's. The civil code makes no distinction between white sheep and black sheep. How could Piminetti decide the case of the lame lamb?

Soon after my arrival I was almost cited as a defendant before Piminetti's court of justice. I wonder if I should call my mistake malpractice, or just lack of knowledge of local standards. I do not hesitate to relate my case, so that younger practitioners may avoid my mistake.

A friendly grandfather came to me and asked for a bottle of “worm oil”; the modern anthelmintics are still called by the time-honored names. I not only handed him the bottle, indicating the dosage for his grandchild, but I made a comment.

“These new compounds are excellent,” I explained, “but to take them is not everything. Reinfection has to be forestalled. I mean, you must not feed the worms to your chickens.”

“They like them!”

“Yes, but the worm eggs reappear! You find them in the dry dust of your court and the wind brings them back to your kitchen. The best you can do is to pour kerosene on all worms you see and to burn them. Do that, will you?”

“Sure, if you tell me to,” the grandfather said. Next day he returned and was furious.

“You gave me the silliest orders in all my life!”

“Wasn’t the medicine any good? No worms?”

“Plenty of worms! But when I poured kerosene on and lit it, my outhouse burned down! I built it twenty years ago! All first-class, hardwood boards! And it’s gone!”

Granddad must certainly have passed uncounted hours of quiet reflection in the hardwood building, to be so mad at me.

“Terribly sorry,” I said sincerely. “Did it have a little heart in the front door, the same as in Germany? Those Brazilian toilets are so inartistic!”

He refused to change the subject.

“You have to pay for it! You gave the orders!”

I made a timid attempt. “Maybe it was the wind...”

“Burned to the ground!” he retorted. “I only obeyed your orders. Orders are orders.”

I had no argument against this equation. I had the impression that I could not have explained to my judge the differences between orders and suggestions, that Piminetti would charge me with the expenses of an on-the-spot investigation, and I know that proceedings against doctors, whatever their result, are damaging to their private practice. So I said, “There is a heap of old boards behind the pharmacy. You may get them all. On what I earned on your worm oil, I can’t buy you nails. Besides, I guess the nails were not burned. And you’ll have to cut a new heart. If you want to sue...”

I had used the right intonation. He realized that a compromise had its advantages. And his grandson had no more worms.

“Well, give me the boards,” he said. “But it will never be the same again. Twenty years, you see! One gets an affection even for a modest building. Memories...”

“You are right,” I admitted. “A new building is never quite the old one.”

That was how I avoided confronting Piminetti with a legal problem. Of course, he meets them anyhow. The layman has the illusion that legislators have foreseen every case and that judges have nothing else to do but apply the rules in particular cases. The simple judicial procedures in Donna Irma prove the contrary as convincingly as the decisions of the Supreme Court.

For the time being it is the case of Widow Kraupel’s cow that occupies public opinion. Piminetti has smoked a good ten dozen of his corn-leaf cigars while pondering over it, without coming to a decision, and I presume the case will finally come up at the court in the city, where problems are solved by means of heavy books - provided those books contain

rules for courtship in the animal kingdom. I'll try to report the case as various witnesses have described it to those who told me.

First I must explain to those who happen to be unaware of it that keeping a bull is an expensive and dangerous business. Such a beast needs more fodder than a cow and does not pay for it with milk. When it is kept in a pasture there must be a good fence in order to avoid trouble with the neighbors. When it is kept in the stable there is a lot of cleaning and fodder-carrying. Not even the butcher will come and lead a bull across the village. It is justified for the owner to ask for cash, in case the services of his bull are called for.

Now, Widow Kraupel has two cows, two beautiful brown-and-white, well-educated animals of irreproachable character, and her neighbor Jeremiah, director of the choir of God's Own Children, has a bull, not of identical behavior. The other night the bull knocked down the common fence, where some of the posts were decayed, and had a nice time with one (or both?) of the brown-and-whites. Those are the facts on which both parties agree.

The morning after, Jeremiah knocked at the Widow Kraupel's door, although the neighbors are not used to exchanging courtesy visits. All he said was, "Hundred milreis bull-tax."

"God and his holy angels!" cried the widow, already informed about the night's adventures. "Nothing else? To knock the fence down and then ask for money! Who called your bull? Not me!"

"Probably your Rosina."

"Did she tell you that? I like your nerve - your bull comes here for his amusement and you come to get the money for it! In Rio da Serra there are funny houses with girls inside and a red lamp outside. And if a stupid guy stumps in there and knocks the door down, it surely isn't the ladies who pay!"

When Jeremiah, God's Own Child, heard this about the Rio da Serra ladies, he blushed. If he has to go to Rio da Serra every now and then, it's only because his brother-in-law lives there, and for no other reason.

"You better send your Rosina into such a house! And I go to Piminetti!"

"You go and so do I! We will find out who is going to pay for his fun," menaced the widow, and went off to put her horse to the buggy while Jeremiah rode off in furious haste.

As an experienced judge, Piminetti did not pass hasty judgment. He has promised to carry out a thorough inquiry on the spot, to investigate fence, cow, and bull, and invite the litigants afterward. Meanwhile people will let him hear that *vox populi* which the ancients considered the *vox Dei*. For the time being no consent has been reached. Bull owners favor the bull owners while honest housewives favor the widow. Peaceable persons anxious to arrange a compromise have suggested various settlements, such as partition of the future calf.

Piminetti expects inspiration from cigar smoke. He rolls one corn-leaf cigar after the other, and no doubt he is worried by the legal aspects of the lawsuit.

There is, however, something to repay Piminetti for all his troubles and that is "political power," a narcotic with a rather great number of addicts almost everywhere. Piminetti is a politician, which means he does not belong to any party, but gives both of them (they have different names and adherents, but very similar principles) very confidential information, sometimes even puts on shoes and travels to the state capital, Florianopolis, to a conference with mysterious, outstanding personalities. Such trips are followed by no less mysterious allusions to bridges, schools, state hospitals, and seminaries to be erected here, as well as the confidential assurance that Donna Irma is destined to become capital of the district ... great

plans which so far have only been realized to the extent that his brother-in-law has become school custodian and his wife postmistress. Perhaps, perhaps - that would crown Piminetti's achievements - he will be able to sell a parcel of land unfit for *aipi*-planting to the state.

For the time being he has to be satisfied that the Brazilian mails pay rent for his wife's room and the full salary of a responsible postmaster. It is a profitable job, and in a region where reading and writing are considered fine arts, anything but tiresome. There is neither a phone nor a telegraph service. The net of wires which has caught the world and keeps it together ends somewhere back of Blumenau. Incoming letters are not delivered but stored. If anybody thinks there is something for him he is allowed to dig into the increasing heap. Before Christmas people flock in (who does not believe in Santa Claus?) and ask if there are letters for them. It happens that a relative has written "from over there." Next Christmas he will get the reply. God's Own Children and Mennonites receive their tracts even from the United States and Switzerland. Newspapers reporting contemporary events do not arrive. Mrs. Piminetti may handle incoming and outgoing mail while preparing fragrant gravies for the daily polenta without neglecting the time-honored laws of Venetian cookery.

VII

My place is across from Piminetti's. It's the pharmacy, the office, the first-aid station, and it is only my own fault if it is not more. My predecessor also sold homeopathic medicines, nostrums, bananas, *cachaça*, used pants, "bull-powder" for indifferent steers, and acted as retail and wholesale egg merchant. Doctor Rube came from Lubeck and spoke sailors' German from having been physician in the German fleet.

I am living in Rube's house and have to bear the consequences of his activities. The distrust against him continues and I get to feel it. That's the reason I have to speak about one who does not live in this valley any more.

The inhabitants of the valley have only lives; Rube has a biography. The life of a European has been, in this century, a novel in itself, just waiting for an author to write it. (Blessed those whose lives could never become a novel, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.) As I learned from our contemporaries, he had studied medicine, which he did not like, because his doctor father forced him to. "At examination time," someone told me, "he played the role of a nervous student who is just too shaky to unpack his enormous knowledge."

"Even if you are an ass,
Go to Rostock and you will pass,"

quoted his father, who promised the professors at the University of Rostock - many of them his own fellow students - that he would not let his son loose upon mankind. The father kept his promise. The young man had inclinations that drew him to the bluejackets, so he applied for a commission in the Navy, where he had to treat two diseases only.

At the time of the Spanish Civil War Dr. Rube received orders to present himself in civilian dress as a "tourist" in Cadiz. Since the inclinations just mentioned were in no sense warlike, Dr. Rube arranged a trip as a tourist to Brazil. He had friends in the ports, he had commercial talents and made a living. Soon the time came when Germans of military age were confined to camps, which although not provided with gas chambers were far from pleasant, and where tropical heat, hunger, dullness, and malicious or trivial harassment rendered life difficult, especially for married men, forced out of their homes and jobs. But Rube had been a bachelor, and had had no regular occupation. He became sort of a quartermaster, and though he did not earn sympathy, he was the only man to leave the camp he had entered penniless, with a dozen suitcases. Later he landed here, on the "frontier," as druggist and obstetrician.

There are some who are attracted by the frontiers of civilization, and others who are cast out to those far frontiers by circumstances. The former love the space, the silence, the chance to settle new lands. The latter just stand there and wonder. "Here it's very much like Siberia," I heard a very old man happily say. "*Je suis née et j'ai toujours vécu à deux pas de l'Opéra*," said a friendly lady I once met, and it sounded like a line from a tragedy of fate.

Dr. Rube was not fond of life on the frontier and did what he could in order to return to town. That's why he needed the money. "He grabbed it and snatched it," I heard. The colonists had expected someone like the "old German doctor" whose friendly dignity they well remembered. Instead, there was Rube, who came running every time a pig was slaughtered, asking for ears and tail and a few scraps "for the dog" - "He came flying in with the carrion crows, the *urubus*," the colonists say, "and ate everything himself." Just like the other bachelors of the forest, he washed his linen and dishes only in cases of utter emergency. This would have been accepted, if only he had not taught others how to become rich. "You are

mending your sheets, Mrs. Wutzke?" he would ask with an air of superiority. "You know how I do it? I take my old sheets, my rusty chamber pot, my burnt-out electric bulbs, and pass a night in a Blumenau hotel. I simply exchange everything and back I come."

Even that would have passed as a frank or very practical joke, but one day his well ran dry and he used to go and fetch water from his neighbor's. "The hens cackled so loud, and by God, all you could see was Rube's broad backside, and he was grabbing the eggs in the nests!" But the end of Rube's career was brought about by those inclinations we hesitate to mention in more detail but which caused righteous indignation among persons who from early youth had learned the differences between cock and hen. One morning Rube found one of his young friends in lamentable condition at his door and had to extract a manioc root by surgical means. Finally a bottle of acid happened to hit him on the head, and although it was at noon right between Piminetti's and the pharmacy, there were no witnesses to testify about it.

Our fate is ruled by the whim of coincidences. The bottle appeared on the stage of events, just when I had won a nice sum of money in a contest. I purchased Rube's unsalable junk, his homemade ointments and homeopathic trash at shameless prices, but willingly, because I knew I bought cool evenings, deep silence, and the taste of fresh, warm milk at the same time. Dr. Rube also was able to realize the dream of his life: he bought a house on the edge of a slum in the port of Santos and established a boardinghouse for sailors and smugglers.

Here he became a legend. It was whispered that his dog "Vino" was trained to bring him chickens (he always got the head, neck, and wing tips and slept on a spring mattress), and that he had unscrewed a toilet basin in a hotel and had managed to smuggle it out to be used in his cloisterlike boardinghouse....

It is a handicap to be the successor of a despised man. "The next is never any better," people say. "They certainly were pals; that's why he left him his place." Peasants are cautious. They avoid houses where they have been ill-treated or cheated. Children cannot be dragged through doors behind which they were pricked with hooked, rusty needles. But in spite of everything, my thoughts often veer gratefully toward Dr. Rube. It was thanks to his instinct for methods on the borderline of legality that I started practicing medicine *sub specie apothecarii*.

The situation can be explained only by an essay on Brazilian legal jurisdiction. "Brazil has more laws than any other country," a dear native friend explained to me in São Paulo. "The only law we lack is the one which prescribes that laws have to be obeyed." Another, himself a teacher in law school, added, "Brazil received the Roman law from Portugal, Napoleon gave her the *code civil*, the United States furnished her with a constitution, and Mr. Schacht inspired her currency regulations. The Brazilian legislators had nothing else to do but to invent the loopholes for the whole set."

The consequences are strange. One is allowed to burn entire forests with all their animals, but there is a law for the protection of dogs which is so severe that nobody dares to shoot a mad dog. Consequently more people die of hydrophobia than of snake bite. There is no divorce, but a legal separation. The naturalized Brazilian has all the obligations of the native, but not his rights. He cannot become an editor, street sweeper, owner of a mine or weekend house on the shore, captain of a ship, or shareholder in the state oil company. Hence certain periodicals have to use the name of the charwoman as "editor in chief." Immigrants born in Portugal enjoy almost the same rights as natives. A citizen of Goa or Macao may teach history in schools, but not a non-Portuguese teacher. The difference between urban and rural areas (called "the Interior") is so pronounced that many a law only reaches as far as the last stop of the trolley-bus. "The Interior" is a different world, and there is a story about a Brazilian who traveled to Le Havre and stayed there. "I am not interested in the Interior," he said.

Legislators had to invent special laws for the “Interior,” more specifically for the strip between the cities and those spots where billboards alongside the road announce that from here on the state is no longer responsible for what happens and everybody has to fight back as best he can in case he should be attacked.

There are special regulations for doctors and pharmacists in the Interior. There has always been a shortage of doctors in South America. Only a very small number of doctors left the happy old Europe of yore. Those who emigrated were the relatively small groups of idealists, bankrupts, and adventurers. Not that the three groups can be strictly separated. You have to be an adventurer, and you need courage, if you want to be an idealist, and idealists easily go bankrupt. The well-meaning and often misinformed North Americans tried to help, and financed an entire university as a gift to the State of São Paulo. But as soon as the first doctors had received their degrees, legislation was drawn up which made practice in Brazil almost impossible for Europeans. All at once there were fewer doctors available than before. And the privileged few did not dream about leaving the big cities. São Paulo and Rio boast of having half of all the doctors practicing in the country. The ports on the coast have nine-tenths of the rest. Pharmacists do not dream, either, about moving to the movie-less regions.

Therefore legislators set out to think about remedial loopholes. A pharmacist’s apprentice with a fourth-grade education may pass an examination and become a pharmacist himself, “to practice his profession in the Interior.” He may open a business at any place six kilometers or more from the nearest pharmacist. He is allowed - he is practically obliged - to give first aid. And what is, we may ask, the first aid in case of acute appendicitis? To remove the appendix, of course. And a tumor of the brain? No means but radical operation. Abdominal pregnancy? Operation again. Consequently the pharmacist’s apprentice has to be a universal specialist once he sets off for the forests and the country beyond them.

The foremost difficulty is to obtain a fourth-grade diploma from a Brazilian school. A doctor’s diploma from abroad cannot be substituted for it. (The same is true for the literacy test one must take for naturalization.) Fortunately, the teacher of the preparatory class will sell this precious document for a very reasonable sum to the majority of the candidates lacking it. It is a bit disappointing to learn later on that Santa Catarina does not recognize diplomas issued in the State of São Paulo. Before disappearing into the forest one has to travel once more to Florianopolis and tell again what distilled water is. Then there are no more obstacles.

That a pharmacist’s apprentice becomes a general practitioner in the Interior was a priceless piece of information I obtained from Dr. Rube. I feel deep gratitude, and if our common patients call him and his ancestors² names, I never fail to mention that he had, under the thick layers of fat, a human heart.

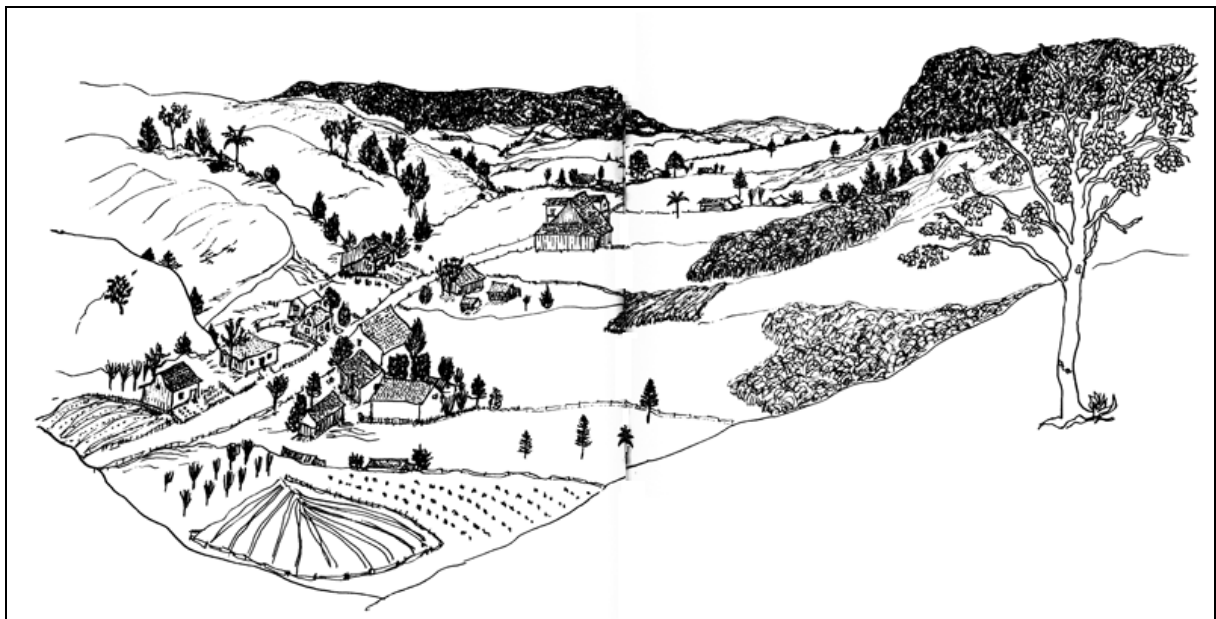
² erratum: *ancestors*’

VIII

When the state, the unsatiable monster, has been satisfied with seals, stamps, and taxes, we are allowed to start the more human struggle for our daily bread. It is doubtless easier here, where man is a rarer animal than in the ants' nests called cities, but it is by no means easy. It is equally difficult everywhere to fight fever and ulcers, equally hopeless everywhere to fight old age and death. And here we feel, standing between patient and doctor, not only Rube's ghost but also the diffidence of the peasant against the man from town, of the old colonist against the newcomer, of the man with a particular set of words and values against him who gives another meaning to them. The frontiersman is particularly wary of the nearest doctor. ("If he knew his job he would have stayed where he came from".) A journey, like the pilgrimage in olden times, is a part of the cure. Patients from Donna Irma take the bus to the hospital in Tenente Gregorio; those from Tenente Gregorio start off for Blumenau as soon as they see danger. They help the Blumenau doctors to make a living, because their wealthy patients listen only to their tentative diagnoses and then they fly to São Paulo.

I sadly lack those supports of the doctor's authority: the sets of machines which are indispensable since the doctor became less important than the wonder drugs. X-ray apparatus and all sorts of radiating and irradiating gadgets alone impress the colonist sufficiently to sacrifice a fat calf to Aesculapius, or at least a black cock. "To X-ray" is a verb which has penetrated to the utmost frontier. "My boy doesn't want to study in school; I have to have his head X-rayed," a mother told me. "There is a doctor in Rio de Paca; he irradiates all diseases and then they are gone," I heard. "The hospital has a machine to get the blood pressure out of the body," a man assured me, and added, "I have seen it with my own eyes."

The faith in the technical miracle, the respect for the dark chamber in which mysterious lights are switched on and off ("Poisoned people have green shadows") does not exclude faith in other types of magic: charms and spells. Here the old Teutonic traditions about sorcerers, witches, magic wands and words mingle with the ideas of black Brazilians who brought their own charms with them on the slave ships and still treat erysipelas, "the rose," with them. "Charms do help," says Pott, the worker at the sawmill, and he is ready to prove it with a story while the saw cuts a new board off the forest's fallen giant.



“There was an old widow, in a valley between Mirador and Timbo, and she was poor. There was no cow on her pasture. She had given the last one to her daughter, as a dowry; the plague had taken her last pig. So the old woman went to the priest and said: ‘You’ve got to help me, Father, I don’t know where to turn.’

“‘Dear lady,’ said the padre, ‘the church is poor and so am I, I can’t give you a milreis. But I’ll give you a piece of advice. Try the charms, let the patients come, and God will help you.’

“‘But, Padre,’ the woman said, ‘I don’t know the charms!’

“‘You don’t? But that’s simple. You go to the patient, you bend down, say the Lord’s Prayer, in a low voice, once or twice, and you add, “If it helps, fine; if it doesn’t, all right,” and leave the rest to the mercy of God.’

“Well, the widow goes off and she starts to practice ... and it does not take a year’s time before she’s got cattle and hogs and chickens and geese, and people are bringing her the sick from everywhere around.

“And as time passes the padre himself falls ill and has an ugly abscess in the throat, so that he can’t swallow. A few hours and he can’t breathe either. He faints.... Fortunately his neighbor drops in, asks no questions, lifts him into his carriage, and rushes him, as fast as his horses can run, to the famous old woman.

“When she sees the padre she gets frightened and she thinks: ‘If he opens his eyes!’... But she has to act as she always acts, she recites the Lord’s Prayer and adds in a low voice, ‘If it helps, fine; if it doesn’t, all right.’... And in that very moment the padre opens his eyes, at hearing what he himself taught her, and bursts into laughter ... and as he laughs, the abscess breaks open and he is healed?”

Who would dare to say that charms are of no avail? I am not so famous as the widow in this story and cautious patients still ask me, “You know what ‘flu’ is?” I have to explain modestly that in twenty years of practice I really have seen several cases of flu. It is more difficult, when a woman cross-examines me this way: “Just tell me - how come? When I wasn’t married I always had girls - and now that I am married it’s always a boy!” A young man entered the other day and asked: “You know anything about women’s diseases?”

Gynecology is an enormous field and I cannot pretend to be a specialist, but I said, “Sure, I know quite a lot about them.”

“Well, you might start treating me right away; I got one from a woman last week in Rio de Paca, and it’s a bit of a nuisance.”

It is hardly possible to anticipate what will create confidence here and what factors will destroy it. A patient, a shopkeeper’s wife, once entered my bedroom - I cannot remember why - and saw the three rows of books which represent, rather pitifully, my library.

“The new doctor isn’t worth very much,” she told her customers the same day. “I went into his room, and you know what he has hidden there? Books! He still has books! He is only a student!”

My practice improved after I had suffered a heart attack. They brought me the cardiac cases. “He’s got it himself; he sure must know about it.”

I have learned a great deal. I know now that when a woman says, “My husband is always jumping out of his trousers,” it means that a specific against diarrhea is needed. “Aspirin for bus rides,” is an antihistamine for journeys. “The drawing ointment” is black ichthyol salve, and it is traditionally applied to abscesses. Camomile, given to babies when they cry, is called “tooth-powder,” since “the trouble must be that they are teething.”

Slowly I get some idea of the colonists' concepts of life and health.

Newborn children need a pacifier to make them sleep. If it falls on the ground, the mother sucks it clean. If the mother becomes pregnant her milk turns to poison. You have to give cow's milk. If the child does not digest it, he gets powdered milk which "does not come from cows, but there are factories with machines to make it." Later, when children eat candy, they get worms from it. Some worms are in the belly, others are in the blood. Blood worms cause a yellow complexion and epileptic fits. The worms regulate their life by the moon and therefore worm oil helps only before full moon. The diseases of grown-ups are flu, pneumonia, and the appendix, which must be taken out. The seat of the flu may be in the head, the neck, the lungs, or in the intestines, but sometimes, too, it "sits in the nose and can't get in or out." I heard about one man who "had flu in his head about women; he left his old wife at home and disappeared with a girl and was never heard of since." The "cause of all diseases" is catching cold, except that skin diseases come "from the blood" which must be purified with tea. Stomach-ache comes from the liver. Fever may be "inside" or "outside." Wet cloths or beaten eggs applied to the feet draw fever downward, and "it leaves you across the toes." "Blood pressure" is bad, too.

Diseases "have to pass, just as they came." If they don't, you try the charms, flu injections, pencil in (penicillin), and the white balm and black balm you buy in the store; if all this doesn't help and you think the patient is going to die, you may ask a doctor. In the course of many a doctorless year the colonist has acquired his own wisdom, his own remedies. Eczema in children is treated with "yellow medicine," best of all with a tea made from the flowers of squash. In the case of a grown-up, one had better use stronger means, such as a mixture of gunpowder, milk, and vinegar, for external use. If you have rheumatism, you dig a deep hole, take some soil which has never seen the sun, and make a poultice for your sore limbs. Wounds and ulcers are treated with cabbage leaves, chalk, and whey. Pains and tumors need a poultice made of *cachaça*, fat, and salt. Italians and their neighbors follow the axioms of the great doctors of the past: *Qui bene purgat bene curat*, and use castor oil in heroic doses against all conceivable bodily ills. Sick chickens get tincture of iodine in their water, and if they die in spite of it, the plague is to blame. Sick horses need turpentine. Anyone who doubts such remedies is an ignoramus - he should buy a doctor-book and he will find all of them.

I often envy my Brazilian colleague in Tenente Gregorio, who does not understand any German and therefore avoids all discussion about medical topics. He was clever enough to marry a German girl, with whom he won't have any argument either, and who made him brother, cousin, uncle-in-law of half the valley. Dr. Euclides warns to return to town, he wants to become rich, but he knows of better ways than exchanging chamber pots. If I didn't know that he has never been nearer to Paris than Curitiba in Paraná, I would say he was a disciple of Dr. Knock. ("A healthy man is a patient who doesn't know what's wrong with him.") I am unable to follow his principles, but they could be useful for younger physicians. They read: (1) Every patient must have an injection every four hours, day or night, so that he knows why he is kept in the hospital. (2) Nonsurgical cases stay for week, surgical ones for a month. (3) In cases of obstetrical difficulties, start the proceedings by Caesarean section. (4) In case of errors and complications, double the bill, so that the patient will not believe you have a bad conscience. (5) The appendix is about to perforate, but the patient's life can be saved by an immediate operation. (6) Unless the patient pays he cannot leave the hospital. This last principle has led to a few complications: Dr. Euclides had to bury a geriatric patient in a state of advanced decomposition, at his own expense, and he had to adopt two children who were not called for, a white child and a black one. The financial results compensate for such minor incidents. I send my hopeless cases to Dr. Euclides. He quickly X-rays the agonizing. That helps my statistics and his finances and our relations are most amiable.

Dr. Euclides wants to return to town, to move into one of those heaps of concrete and noise with the desertlike characteristics of the outskirts of European cities. He is satisfied with X-raying the dying. I wish to die here and prefer to X-ray houses, pots, and cupboards in order to learn more about my somewhat embarrassing surroundings.

This does not mean that I analyze my patients. Psychotherapy would be the most useless specialty in the valley. Neuroses do not thrive in the forest.

I have not yet seen a patient in need of an analyst.

Modern psychologists suggest that a patient should talk his troubles away. It often helps. It is a great relief to find open ears. The method has the disadvantage of wearing the helper out, unless he is deaf, or as wise as the world-famous psychoanalyst, "the grand old man of the school," who used to say, "Speak, my friend, open your mind," and then switched off his hearing aid. Others suggest talking to the patient, talking longer and louder than his own neurosis. But the greatest, most helpful curative and prophylactic method is a third one: to stop talking. Hermits are not nervous. Trappist monks have experienced it for centuries: silence and preparation of cheese, silence and distilling of liquor, open the way to perfect inner harmony. The same activities have identical effects if carried on rather than in the monastery, in places where the walls are the equally impervious walls of trees.

Colonists keep silent. They do not speak, because it is difficult to talk while capeening. They keep silent because they have told each other everything, because you must not wear out your small stock of words. They are very unlike the characters in novels, who talk for page after page or insist on apostrophizing the absent. Long silence cures their minds and they need their doctor for bodily ailments only.

IX

If I wish to know more about the colonists, if I am unduly curious, I cannot resort to questions. I could not get an answer.

The colonist, after a life in the wilderness, knows the trails of the wildcats and where to look for the serpents' eggs. One who has searched for twenty years for books, for phrases, sometimes for a word, in libraries as complex as forests, has a similar sense for the hiding place of papers.

I am very proud: here, where ferns outgrow human beings, where history can only be patched together from stories, I have found a drawer containing real documents! Some ten years ago plans were made to issue a booklet about the first twenty-five years of the Donna Irma settlement. Many of the settlers wrote two or three pages of their recollections. Nothing was printed; the sheets, the torn-out pages of copybooks, with their difficult, old-fashioned script and misspelled words, written in various dialects intermingled with misunderstood Portuguese, have turned yellow. I have dusted them and read them respectfully, and I will copy a few pages, without changing a single letter:

"We arrived, together with another family on May 12th, 1922. It had rained a great deal the day before, the roads were full of mud and holes; riding a carriage was no pleasure. It was quite dark when I arrived with my daughter. My husband had arrived earlier with a four-horse team. A *rancho* [hut or shack] had been put at our disposition on a *colonia*; we had to move in for the moment. After getting our luggage down we had to prepare a cot to sleep in. There were two *cipo* nets [*cipo*, Port. - a sort of very resistant fiber of a creeper plant]. The men could use them as hammocks. We women had brought boards; we spread our wadded quilts and covers over them and called them beds. The men knew that there was a *venda* at the next *colonia* and went there. The wife of the *vendist* had already made coffee, and soon we laid the cloth for supper on the biggest trunk. Buns, sausage, coffee were the first supper in the forest.

"Well, I sure will not forget the first night on the rim of the forest. I had heard so many long tales about serpents and other poisonous animals, that I thought they would enter through slits and holes in the *rancho*, and I stayed awake all the night. When I think about it today I must admit the snakes are not quite so bad as I thought. One gets used to everything.

"Next morning we had to find a way to cook. The men stuck two fork-shaped branches into the ground, put a stick across. The kitchen was ready; we could cook for ourselves. During the day we two women set out to look for food. First we went to the *vendist* to see what he had to sell. His friendly wife offered us her oven in case we wanted to bake bread, and we were glad she did, because now we had to bake the daily bread ourselves.... From here we went to the place they call the main square, there was the house of the well-established colonist K. We were received in a friendly way and Mrs. K said she would be glad to teach us the ways of life in the settlement, an offer we gladly accepted. At another colonist's I saw big, round pumpkins, and as I am fond of them I asked the landlady if she would sell me one. 'Do take one,' she said, 'they cost nothing.' I looked for the smallest, but it was still heavy enough; I had trouble carrying it to our *rancho*. The next day being Sunday, I wanted to cook sweet pumpkin as we did at home, with a great deal of sugar and spice. Nobody liked it; we had to throw the stuff away. Later I heard that it was a fodder pumpkin and now I have them myself for pigs and cows.

“Our own *colonia* was too far away from the temporary *rancho* and my husband, who had started to work right away, had to walk the whole long stretch mornings and evenings. Finally he built a very small *rancho* on our *colonia* and we moved in.... Just when things were looking quite cozy in the small *rancho*, it started to rain. The roof wasn’t tight; we had to sit under umbrellas to stay dry. My husband hurried to clear land and the neighbors, who had been there for two years already, helped us to build a big *rancho*. We covered it with homemade wooden shingles and made the floor of the same material. We were really happy when we could move in there.

“We lived for three years in this *rancho*. Meanwhile a small schoolhouse had been built and the first school celebration was held in our old *rancho*. All these years I have seen many a school celebration, but the first one was the most memorable. Every family brought home-made cakes, the men brought drinks and toys for the children. We sang and told stories until morning and the night passed quickly. All present were sorry when it was all over.

“As my husband was busy clearing the forest I had to do all the housework. Every day I went to the Ks’ *colonia* to fetch milk, sweet potatoes, and sometimes vegetables. Sometimes I had to turn back because the Donna Irma creek had become a swollen stream, and the flood waters had carried off the planks that served as a bridge. Once I turned back halfway. A tree had fallen across the road. There were more than a dozen howling monkeys jumping around on it, and I got frightened and cleared out. The year we arrived it was very rainy; we could not burn a *roça* [burnt clearing in the forest], we had to carry branches and leaves to one spot and burn them, to get land for planting. When our corn began to ripen we got into new trouble: the parrots came and nibbled from every ear. My husband worked on the roads and therefore he had taught me to handle the shotgun and to chase the parrots away. One day I really pressed the trigger and what happened was that my neighbor’s wife came running along and said she had immediately noticed that it was not my husband, because when men shoot they make more noise. I still laugh about it when I recall it. My neighbor’s wife had bought her first cow a couple of months earlier and she was afraid I would aim in her direction and shoot her cow.



“The second year we had our own pasture and we bought our first cow. Now we had milk, butter, and cheese. When dairy service was organized in Donna Irma we bought four more cows and could then furnish milk. So we earned cash, but work increased too. We built a real log house and our second daughter was born. We were thrifty and did not fear any type of

work, so we progressed by 1939 to a brick house. Today life is different in Donna Irma. We have a doctor and a dentist, but oh, was it different years ago!... Once my husband had a terrible toothache and he just went to the neighbor and asked if he had pliers for drawing nails; he could not stand it any longer. The neighbor fetched his pliers, my husband sat down on a tree stump and had his tooth pulled. I also remember my thirtieth birthday. My husband cleared another acre of the forest - there was a tree he could not get down, because its branches were tangled with those of another, half uprooted by a storm. I wanted to help my husband saw it off. We were half through when the other tree came down. A big branch tore my clothes off and bruised my breast blue and green....

"I won't forget the first marriage celebrated here. The day before was rainy enough. The bride and groom drove down to Hammonia and took the witnesses along; there was no nearer place to get married. The day of the wedding they drove home; they arrived in the evening, the bridegroom and witness with their pants rolled up, after wading through the bogs, while the bride, in veil and wreath, sat on the wagon box holding the reins. They were received in triumph. The horses wouldn't have made it by themselves, the road was just too bad. Today nobody drives a wagon to a wedding; there are buggies and cars. So many things have changed for the better.... But I like to recall the olden days, when everything was much simpler and many a friend still lived who now sleeps forever. The life of a colonist's wife has many dark sides, but just as many attractive features...."

I wonder if paper ages more quickly in the warmer regions. I can hardly believe that certain of these were lines written only fifteen years ago. Do the settlers' accounts seem so ancient because they were written while the trees were still living the last years of their timeless reign? I read:

"After due preparation, and having passed the Russian examination as a teacher of public schools, I served for ten years in the German first-grade schools in Wolhynia and for one year on the Crimean peninsula. At this time, a couple of years before the First World War, a great many Germans left Russia for overseas. My predilection for a subtropical climate suggested the choice of a country without long, hard winters. When finally, by happenstance, or by decision of the Divine Providence, I received my prospectus of the Hanseatic Colonizing Society, I made up my mind: off we go to Brazil!"

The start was always difficult, but the immigrant of the first postwar period did not resent the lack of bathrooms and radio sets. He was, we feel, the last of his kind, a worthy adversary of the last fortress of the trees.

"...The benches were nailed to the wall to save room; the fireplace was cleverly built, it looked like a locomotive but did not move. To find food was difficult; often there was little to be had, often nothing. Corn flour often was not to be had for a fortnight, you couldn't always get manioc flour. You had to go to the main square to find *aipim*. Instead of meat one used remnants of tried-out fat; the hard cakes were called grindstones; we cooked them in various ways, ate them as hash, mincemeat, or spread on bread. The cornmeal bread was often bad, as we did not know how to prepare it. We sometimes cooked everything we had in one pot; one would call it pig's swill, but it tasted good. Hunger adds flavor; difficult work does its part and when we had hoarded some pigs and chickens at Christmastime life became easier...."

Twenty-five lines about twenty years - that's all the papers preserve. The younger generation could not even write as much. The school, which does not teach Portuguese, also prevents the young from learning German. A few stories still survive about the heroic times, when men were sort of merry giants in a carefree world. I used to write them down, when they were told to me.

“When my grandfather and his brothers came, the forests were still untouched. There was plenty of rain, today’s brooks were streams then, and - oh! there were fish! People from around Tenente Gregorio, like grandfather, rode up here, across the trails, for fishing, almost every Sunday. There was only a single trail. They slept in tents.

“In the evening they lit a fire, fried the fish, and cooked a great big pot of *pirão* [a sort of porridge made of tapioca]. They had to eat all the fish, because panthers and ocelots came out of the forest when they smelled them at night. They cut the big fish with a carving knife and ate the *pirão* with a big spoon.

“Once, before going to sleep they wanted to put their fishing tackle in order but they just couldn’t find the fishhooks. ‘All right,’ they said, ‘we’ll look for them tomorrow, when it’s light.’ But they did not find them in daylight either, because the fishhooks had been in the plate they had eaten the *pirão* off, and they had eaten them all.

“If that happened today...! Nowadays you would rush them into the hospital and cut their bellies open. But those were different times. Grandfather and his brothers were up there again, fishing, next Sunday, and with the same hooks.”

Streams and men were different, and so was the railroad. (Oral tradition likes to change a few details. Even Homer, having no documented history of the Trojan War, could not avoid letting a speaking horse slip into his generally truthful account. My gentle reader should pardon me if I also put down the reports without further checking.)

“The railroad had first, second, and third classes and the first was pretty expensive. And when you got seated you saw that everybody was in the same type of carriage: wooden benches and a lot of smoke from the locomotive, and the smoke of corn-leaf cigars, of course. It was a shaky ride and some of the passengers protested, ‘We have paid first class!’ ‘You just wait,’ said the conductor. ‘We paid second,’ shouted others, ‘and here we are!’ ‘You sit and wait and you will see,’ said the conductor. The train went on, swiftly at the beginning, slowing down later. The engine could not carry enough firewood for the whole trip. Then all of a sudden the train stopped. The engine was cool. The train stood there, somewhere on the banks of the Itajai River, not even a *rancho* nearby to get a cup of clear water and a banana. And, see! The conductor reappeared with saws, axes, and hatchets, shouting, ‘You, third class! Off and cut the trees! Passengers second class! Chop the wood, if you don’t mind! Gentlemen first class! Please stay seated!’”

X

Oh, the olden times! It is not easy to learn about them. The pharmacy is certainly not the place to put people into a mood for storytelling. Children say nothing, grown-ups very little. You have to go into the houses and interview your sources, if you want to know more.

In the first house beyond the pharmacy we do not get far by this method. It is the inn, where neither the guests nor the innkeeper stay for long.

I realize that that again sounds unlikely. In the old world nothing is as lasting as a village inn. The painted sign of a public house survives generations. Innkeepers outdo Benedictine monks in *stabilitas loci*. It is different on the *colonia*. The colonist is one of the last of that disappearing species, the jack of all trades. He starts out as a lumberman and a carpenter; he learns the art of cutting boards and shingles, of building a stove and digging a well, and when he has capeened long enough and knows everything about cattle and fowl he starts out again as builder, bricklayer, roofer, plumber, and glazier. Small wonder if he tries his luck in changing trades. The question Horace puts to Maecenas - "Why does no man live happily with the fate his choice had procured or external might has imposed upon him, and holds the fellow man happy who has chosen another way of life?" - has not yet found a satisfying answer. The colonist plants *aipim*, feeds pigs, and observes the owner of the tapioca factory growing stouter every year and buying land for every one of his ten children. He sees hog-merchant Suspenders in his new green truck, looking over, with a broad smile, his freshly bought pigs which he is sure to kill the day after tomorrow at a rewarding profit - those pigs, for which the colonist has cleared the forest, planted corn, and capeened it for a year. One day the colonist loses patience and says: "An innkeeper's life is the really happy one! He leans against the counter all the day long; all he does is open beer bottles, and pour *cachaça* into small glasses! People just bring him their money! His wife has to cook anyhow; she might just as well put more into the same pot. If there is a ball, he chops half an ox into *churrasco* [steaks] and sells every bit of it. That's living! A soft way to earn money!" And he barter, happily, his *colonia* for a big barn which, twice a year, is called a ballroom. It does not take long for him to change his song. "No one is worse off than an innkeeper," he laments. "Others can go to sleep and have a good rest on their corn-husk mattresses, but he has to stay wide awake for two or three drunkards' sake! And how often it happens that such a tippler just puts down his glass forever leaving nothing, but really nothing, except two or three dozen chalk-strokes on the inn blackboard! And balls? God forbid! You prepare the steaks, as the art of *churrasco* demands, put the big slices of meat in a barrel, add vinegar, onion, salt, pepper ... a hell of a lot of work! And then, that very afternoon it starts to pour, the roads soften up, you can't wade through, and nobody wants to risk his horses, unless he has to fetch the midwife - and even then he'll tell his woman to hold it back until tomorrow. A wet night like that costs you twice the profit you can make at the next ball. You try to sell the place to the first person who asks for it, and get back to the *colonia*, where you don't have to buy every piece of bread and every short sausage!"

So the new innkeeper smilingly sells out to the first one who comes along, perhaps a colonist who has been building tobacco-drying ovens for a while and now has a story to tell. "Sure, the tobacco chaps pay good money, but what a hell of a life! Here today, there tomorrow; you sleep in a *rancho*, eat from other people's pots, and once they stop building the ovens - there is a law against them now, they say there are too many and the peasants should produce food - it will be too late to look for something else. Better buy a saloon, pay down what you've got, the rest later on, and sleep under your own roof!"

Thus the innkeeper shoulders the spade, the bricklayer starts pouring out *cachaça*, and in a faraway valley a colonist, fed up with capeening, starts out, saying, "Those tobacco boys pay good money...."



There is nothing constant but the *cachaça* bottle, which like the widow's miraculous cruse always has a glassful left in case somebody tired of this reality should desire a better one.

"*Cachaça* is not water," runs a Brazilian Carnival song, and rightly so. Nor is it wine - we may add - to dissolve the sharp outlines of reality, to give warmth and to appease, like Horace's *caecubum*. It is not brewed to heighten the taste of roast and fowl, like red burgundy, or to open up an artificial paradise, like absinthe. *Cachaça* smells crude and is able in less than no time to transform a strong man into a tottering monster, who is sure he is a hell of a guy! *Cachaça* spells foggy and broken skulls. The only murder case the local stories tell of was committed in a state of drunkenness. The victim had first laid about him with an iron chain, the murderer stabbed him with a carving knife, the neighbors bought mourning dresses for the eight little orphan girls.... "That's *cachaça*, *cachaça* did it," the mourners murmured as they followed the coffin and then went to drink it to console themselves.

Cachaça is cheap and is a good beginning for amusing and sad stories. "You remember when the whole party drove down from the wedding in Husum? The coachman was full, the road was wet - and suddenly all of them were sitting in the hogpen and the pigs grinning happily all around them! Nothing serious happened, but oh, those nice dresses!"

Or, "Old Piehl had had a happy New Year's Eve, and had to get out of his pants on the way home. He just forgot to put them on again, and did not realize it until he staggered into the town square, early in the morning.... Fortunately his two sons-in-law went to meet him with a wheelbarrow, before worse things could happen!"

The sad stories are more numerous, and they sound the same is everywhere. "I am so miserable, I could become an alcoholic if I hadn't drowned my grief in wine," I once heard a man say in Vienna, and a similar philosophy seems common in Donna Irma. *Cachaça* is cheap, but it does not take long to drink a *colonia* away; houses, the physiognomy of which can be interpreted as human faces, lose, through *cachaça*, tiles and windowpanes; boards fall out, moss climbs up, the bushes approach from everywhere and move to reconquer the ground they have lost to man.

Everything depends, as in all human relations, upon dosage. “The body needs a glass of *cachaça* in the evening, to distribute the water,” they say, and, “*Cachaça* is good, even *gambas* [skunks] know that. If you want to catch such a *bicho* [animal] you need only put a cupful on the trail where it usually passes.... The *gamba* is shy. He climbs down out of the tree where he sleeps in the daytime, and goes hunting. He is fond of small chickens, eggs, and fruit. But smelling *cachaça*, he puts his tail into it and licks it off. And if it’s good *cachaça* he drinks it all. Of course he falls asleep. You get him in the morning.”

A small glass of *cachaça* helps through the late hours between supper and bedtime, when the house is dark, the children are sleeping, and the wife is too tired to talk. At the tavern there is always a bit of Sunday atmosphere and you find someone who will listen. If you are ready to pay for a few glasses you will even find someone who believes you.

The other day Biemsch, one of the thirstiest old-timers, was sitting there emptying glass after glass. Why count them, when he gets his old-age pension in German marks, which are rising as quickly as cruzeiro falls, and when the innkeeper himself is counting? Biemsch is busily explaining something to Brick Joseph. Joseph was born in the valley and his knowledge and education are limited to the production of bricks, tiles, and children one after another with the shortest possible spacing.

“Joseph,” he says, “you know what I was in the First World War?”

“No,” says Joseph sincerely. “I don’t know that.”

“I was a corporal, Joseph, a corporal! You know what that means?”

“No, I don’t.”

“I’ll explain it to you, Joseph. You know who Adolf Hitler was?”

“Yes, I know that.”

“There you are! He was a corporal and I was a corporal. He went to jail and I went to jail. He and I! We were exactly the same. But now he is dead and I have my pension.”

And then they shake hands and go home, Biemsch down along the Donna Irma brook, singing “*Die Fahne Hoch*” and swaying like the banners in the song from side to side, and Brick Joseph in the other direction murmuring over and over, as though he must learn it by heart, “The same as Adolf Hitler, exactly the same!”

Speaking of *cachaça*, we cannot leave the corn-leaf cigars unmentioned. They too are an attribute of manhood. In the inn they smell stronger than the *cachaça*; in the bus they outstink the gasoline and oil. I can hardly imagine a worse stench.

I cannot pretend that my opinion is the whole truth. I was glad when a friend in Denmark sent me an illustrated weekly which showed the private museum of a famous tobacco collector. His treasures are cigar boxes, cigar bands, tobacco leaves, and pipes. I immediately procured three freshly rolled “stink-rolls” and mailed them to him. “Dear Sir,” I wrote, “your fame has reached me here. I am sending you three *cigarros de palha*. If you smoke one you will still have two more for your museum. If you have ever smoked anything of a more offensive smell you may tell me so in Danish. I love the language of Hans Christian Andersen. But should you confirm that the *cigarro de palha* is the worst stinkpot on earth, please do so in German, so that I can frame your letter in my office and show it to my patients.”

He replied in German: “Dear Friend! If you are joking, I’ll willingly certify that your *cigarros* are the worst stinkers. I could not, however, say so seriously with a good conscience since I have received similar ones from Pakistan. I suppose they use tiger excrement for spicing there.”

Odors defy description. I will try to tell how these cigars are made.

You take tobacco leaves, dry them in the barn, and once they are dry roll them into a rope, as thick as your thumb. A dark, tarlike liquid will distill from the leaves when they reach what is considered the proper degree of dryness. Then dry the rope itself for a while. When it becomes so hard that you can scrape filaments and coal-black powder off it with your penknife, it is ready. You cut a dried corn leaf and put some of your black stuff into it. You roll it and light it. The first puff reminds you of a fire in a cowshed. Later the fumes become more dense and I suppose are similar to those the witch doctors of the Botocudos used to chase away the evil spirits.

Just as *cachaça* calls for a stronger man than ordinary brandy or whiskey, the corn-leaf cigar would make an old pipe smoker cough and clear his throat, if it did not put him in the condition of a youngster trying his father's cigars for the first time. But if it's not easy to accustom oneself to the colonists' two chief sources of pleasure, it is equally difficult to give either one of them up.

"To renounce the *fumcigar*," says Pott, from the sawmill (*fumo* means "tobacco" in Portuguese), "is possible, but difficult, difficult. And one might fare like Matteus, up in the Camp district."

"What happened to him?" I asked politely.

"He just smoked too much, day and night. And then a friend tells him, 'You,' he says, 'if you put all that money that goes into smoke into the bank, you would be a rich man at the end of the year!' 'Right you are,' says Matteus, throws *charutos* and *cachimbos* [cigars and pipes] away, and stops smoking. And sure enough, at the end of the year he has a lot of money. The second year more. Times were different then. The milreis was on the gold standard and worth as much each month as the month before. Before very long - may I fall dead if it isn't true - the man buys a *papelão* factory!"

"*Papelão*? What's that?"

"The stiff paper you make boxes of! They make it from wood."

"Cardboard?"

"Yes, *papelão*. A nice factory. He left his *colônia* to the weeds and earned *contos* and *contos* [1 conto=1,000 cruzeiros]. Well, *um dia de noite*, one day in the evening, a friend invites him to a birthday party. And while they're sitting there, eating and drinking and eating again, a rider gallops up shouting, 'Hurry up! Your factory is afire!' He jumps into his cart and speeds off at a breakneck pace! And when he gets there, what does he see? Just ashes and embers, and smoke - smoke everywhere. And there, on a still smoldering beam, he lit his cigar again. 'The money was destined to go up in smoke,' he said. And he went back to his *colônia* and capeened and smoked his *fumcigar* as long as he lived."

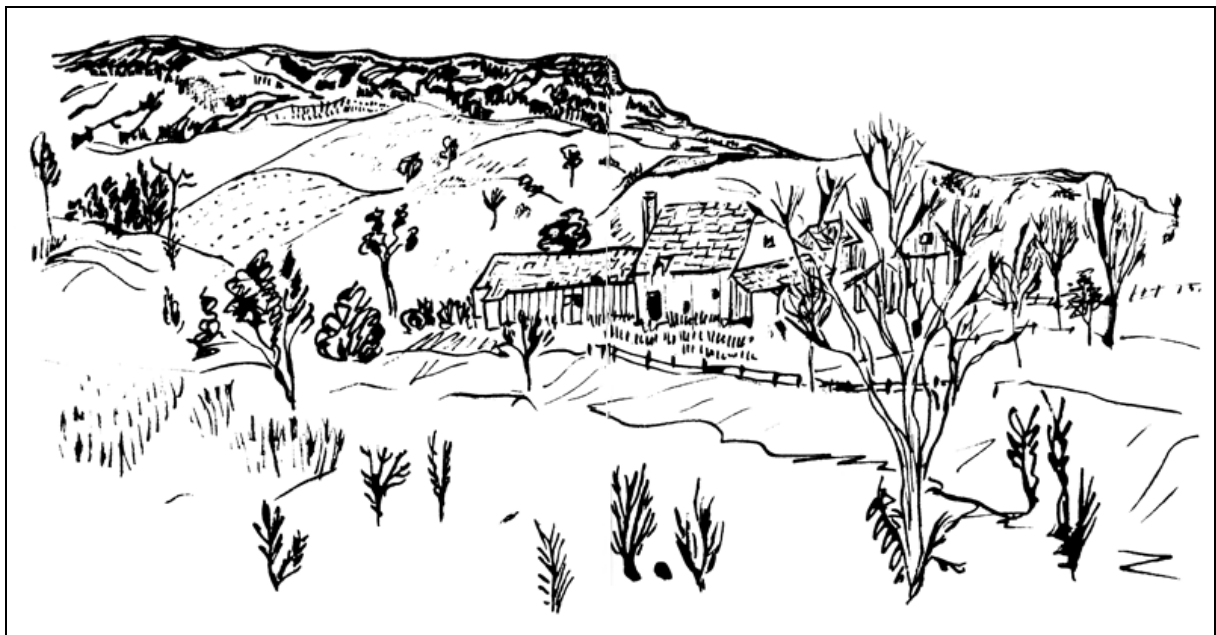
Even if the evenings are devoted to *cachaça* and cigars, the mornings are devoted to milk. When the clouds hang low on the *serra* walls and cocks call to each other (probably to discuss the limits of their spheres of interest and to avoid unnecessary friction in the daytime) it is time to milk the cows. When the last cock has manifested his solemn determination to defend the frontiers of his state and his sovereignty, the first milk cart sets out in the direction of the dairy in front of the tavern. The music of the milk cans is like a modern symphony, representing the battle of four wheels against an uneven road.

Grass grows all the year around. Cows masticate and ruminate according to eternal rhythms. The holy milk - which elsewhere is condensed, iced, powdered, diluted - is here the sure foundation of alimentation and existence. The milk the whole family cannot drink, despite all its determination, is sent to the dairy. The dairy belongs to the *venda*, and there the milk yields - by miraculous transformation through the intermediate stage of money - coffee, sugar, needles, thread, and kerosene. Milk is ever-present, unlike tobacco, which bears money once a year, or *aipi*, which takes two.

Milk carts and milk-cart drivers are important by-products of dairy farming. It's through them that the single *colonias* do not lose touch with human society.

The "milk-carter" has to be a wealthy man. He must have his cart and at least four good horses, because a horse may become lame, but the milk has to get through. He must be healthy, but his wife and children should always be ready as substitutes, because "we are all in the hands of God, we all could suddenly bite the dust, but the milk has to get through." He must have a good memory and remember what he has to bring from the store. He also brings mail and papers, he carries tax money, he is ambassador and press attaché of his particular community. When milk carts roll - swiftly in sunshine, slowly through clay and the mud left after the rains - the milk-carters meet at the *venda* in an atmosphere of great international conferences.

His Excellency the Ambassador of Inhambu reports that four head of cattle were struck by lightning in the last thunderstorm. They were standing at the wire fence and the lightning ran through the wire. Could one eat such a cow? The problem is discussed with competence and it is noted that Italians have come down the *serra*, eaten mighty steaks, and still seem far from dead. News from the Lena Valley: people up at Shotgun Brook have had a terrible year. Mosquitoes, every night mosquitoes, so that no one could sleep. And then all of a sudden locusts, but so many that nothing remained of the *aipi*, not even the stalks. They had to do something about it and called the Bishop of J. to say the prayer against locusts. He really came, brought his book, and prayed. The locusts calmly continued on their job, but the mosquitoes disappeared, as if they had been blown away. The bishop drove off, and departing, before he got into his car, he kept mumbling and repeating, "Could I have said the wrong prayer, in my hurry?"...



There is news which is only whispered: pants and belts were of no avail, and Mrs. Suspenders seems to have had moments of undisturbed, later on of disturbed bliss ... that's nobody else's business, but the urge to listen to news is strong and must be satisfied. The capacity to receive and retransmit news withers away in a world of newspapers and reappears instantaneously where the printed word does not arrive. "Up there, at the *Serra de Paca* a *tropeiro* [wandering horse-dealer] arrived. He has fine horses, a pair of grays for fourteen contos, a pair of blacks for eight, a mule for five ... but look out! In the evening he drove the horses into the pasture and promised to pay twenty milreis pasturage fee - and at sunrise he had disappeared!" The news travels two hours by milk cart in one direction, three or four in every other, and when the *tropeiro* appears the day after - a real gaucho with a ten-gallon hat, wide leather trousers and boots, a sheepskin instead of a saddle, speaking good Santa Catarina German - and offers the gray horses for fifteen contos, everybody just laughs. "He would be happy enough if he could get fourteen!" And when, unsuspectingly, he promises twenty milreis a horse for overnight pasturage, and gives his friendliest smile, he hears, "First the money, good friend, or off you ride with your jades."

Milk-carters are special people, and, being far from the normal sources of news, I enjoy a visit from one of them, if he gives me the pleasure of entering my pharmacy.

XI

Theobald entered the other day - Theobald from Bean Valley - as slowly and calmly as though he had only stopped in for a thorough discussion of the meteorological situation. No doubt of it: the corn, as it stands, needs a day or two of rain. One has to mention such facts if they are to reach the ears of St. Peter.

“Good morning!” we both say. Then I keep quiet, knowing that it is not good to disturb people who are still cogitating.

“Doc,” says Theobald, “do you know anything about sores?”

If I were an inexperienced newcomer, I would answer, “Yes,” or say something about sores in general, about endogenous, exogenous, allergic skin diseases ... but as it is, I say, “Yes ... sores! That’s like with dogs. There are white ones and black ones, small dogs, big dogs, vicious dogs and good ones. If you just tell me you have a dog, I still don’t know...”

“My dog is white and brown,” says Theobald, to settle at least this point.

Then we both keep silent for a while.

“The *escrivão* over there has a dachshund,” I say, lest he should change the argument.

“Such a sore is very disagreeable,” he says.

“It itches,” I prod, “and it’s painful.”

“Especially at night,” says Theobald.

“Then you can’t sleep,” I conclude.

Then we again keep silent for a while and look out of the window, to see if there are any rain clouds in the west. Meanwhile my friend makes up his mind to tell me his secret, as he sees no hope that I should reveal mine: the name of a medicine to treat sores.

“You see, I’ve got an eczema sore,” he says gloomily.

“Very disagreeable indeed,” I reply, just for a change.

“It itches,” he says.

“Especially at night,” I repeat, cruelly.

Theobald sighs deeply, thinks it over, and then says in a conciliatory spirit, “You could just take a look and see this sore. It doesn’t cost anything to show it.”

I could reply that looking at it costs something, but it would not sound well. Therefore I say, “Come on, show me that trouble spot.”

He draws up his pants leg. “That’s the way it looks.”

His diagnosis is correct. It is eczema, an old, wet, inflamed, colorful sore under a net of varicose veins. I see why Theobald has finally made up his mind. If now I should ask how long he has been suffering, he would tell me, “A couple of days.” And if I asked him what he had been using on it, his answer would be, “Nothing at all, nothing.” I frown and study the sore.

“Old sore - several months, at least!”

“Yes, six months or so.”

I try to deepen the furrows in my brow and say, as if I were reading it from the leg:

“You put a lot of stuff on it.”

He makes no attempt to deny it.

“You tried the charms,” I state very seriously.

“My wife said it wouldn’t hurt.”

“It didn’t help either.”

“It didn’t. Then cabbage leaves, to cool it.”

“Summer cabbage,” I confirm. “And then?”

“Ointment.”

“What sort of ointment?”

“The one you take for the teeth, in the tube. They say that’s the best for a sore.”

“And then?” I ask inexorably.

Theobald knows that he has to confess.

“Ink,” he says in a low voice.

Now I am really astonished. Ink, the blue blood of literature, is a very rare liquid in the valley of Donna Irma. Milk, *cachaça*, wine, yes ... but ink?

“Where do you get ink from?”

“My youngest, Leni, goes to school, third grade. The teacher ordered them to buy ink. She is eight now.”

I remember that Theobald has a collection of daughters, and all of them are fresh and lovely. I ask, “How many girls have you got, four?”

“Five! Five of them!”

“Isn’t that fine!”

“It is,” he says. “But it gives you trouble.”

He is visibly relieved to interrupt questioning.

“The oldest is twenty-one, married and has two sons. Maria, the second, is nineteen and engaged to be married. And then the twins....”

“I see, the two I can never tell apart. How old are they?”

“Sixteen this September. The neighbors have been looking at them for sixteen years now and always get them mixed up. So do my wife and I, at dawn or in the twilight. And they stick together, the two of them! Always hand in hand. Sleep in one bed. Watch out for giving one a bigger piece of cake than the other!”

“They are going to have a hard time finding twins to marry!”

“Yes, I often wonder why twins are always girls. There must be a reason for that. The two pairs of Inhambu, the redheads up there on the *serra*, girls, nothing but girls.”

“Maybe brothers would do.... Your neighbor has a dozen or so. I guess they...”

“He has boys, that’s true!”

“And what did you apply after ink?” I ask again, trying to find a policeman’s intonation.

“After? ... Well, the barber suggested putting ashes of red cloth on...”

I am getting angry. The barber prescribed the same remedy for a child with pneumonia, “a spoonful every hour,” and I passed anxious hours before I could hope again.

“Red cloth! The barber can’t even read!”

“People say he knows a lot about disease.”

“Theobald, are you not ashamed? You listen to the talk of all the old women in Bean Valley!”

He has no answer and I switch again, this time to the bedside tune.

“Now sit down. Listen. People are superstitious most everywhere. It’s no worse here than in my country. Know what they do there? For a sore they wait for the full moon. And then until midnight. Then they send a pure virgin to fetch a jug of water. She mustn’t say a word on the way to the well or back. And of this water they put nine drops upon the sore for three Fridays. You can figure that!”

“At midnight?” asks Theobald, flabbergasted.

“Yes. Well now, look here. You must understand that you can’t go on this way. No use of smearing all sorts of stuff upon a leg eczema. We must treat the veins first, we must dress the leg!”

“And what would it cost?” Theobald wants to know, to get down to the essentials.

“Two contos or so, I guess.”

“Two contos! I get one and a half a month with my milk cart and horses!”

He is right. The prices of medicine are quite unrelated to the income of the colonist. He is able to live because he has skimmed milk for his pigs; his wife and the girls capeen. He has sheep, cows, doves, turkeys - but money, those blue bills printed in London, showing the portraits of exiled emperors, Portuguese seafarers, dictators and princesses, he rarely touches.

“Two contos?”

“Two.”

“Couldn’t you get me an ointment?”

“Now, don’t you see? It’s useless! This won’t heal, unless you treat the veins! We have to re-establish the circulation first!”

Theobald folds his pants down and gets up

“I’ll talk it over with my wife,” he sighs.

Yesterday Theobald appears anew. He is carrying an impressive piece of veal and deposits it with a broad smile upon the counter.

“Morning!” he says. “Fine day, isn’t it?”

“Morning!” I reply. “Sunshine and wind. Fine indeed.”

I see that he is going to start treatment and has brought an advance. I have no objection to roast veal and salad.

“It was a bit cool yesterday,” I continue, as if I were a milk-cart driver myself, or a member of the House of Lords, and wait for him to return to our topic.

“I wanted to thank you,” says Theobald. “I thank you very much. Your prescription helped.”

“I didn’t give you any prescription! I just said...”

“You told me to get a jar of water at midnight....”

“I said...”

“As soon as I applied the first drops it stopped itching. After the second time the pains also ceased. I didn’t want to keep on after that but the old woman says, ‘You put it on, it doesn’t cost you anything,’ and I say, ‘Right you are, the doc knows his job, if he told me three times I’ll do it three times.’ And you were right. After the third application it was gone.”

He draws his pants leg up: the sore is gone. The leg is clear and healthy.

“I didn’t pay last time. But I am not one to forget a debt. I pay. We slaughtered a calf yesterday. This is the hind quarter.”

I give up.

“Thank you, Senhor Theobald.”

At the door Theobald turns around.

“It was Leni” he says, “who fetched the water.”

XII

So much for *cachaça* and milk. Before we come to the subject of human dwellings, it should be said that God has a second house, the Roman Catholic one.

From the outside the churches look as similar as those on picture postcards and in schoolbook illustrations saying "The Village." But inside there is a difference in the atmosphere. In the Protestant church there is God, who is a mighty fortress, and Christ, who would win even if the world was full of devils. In the Catholic church the ones who rule are the *Magna Mater*, mother and virgin, who is ready to intercede with the unapproachable and sometimes angry father, and St. Anthony, holding an identical child in his arm. The history of three centuries is full of wars fought for similar differences. Here both churches pray during drought for rain; during inundations for sunshine. The Lord's Prayer is accompanied by similarly fervent supplication for good *aipi* and milk prices. There is no reason for strife. There is a big, half-open barn behind every church, a swing, a fortune wheel, a hearth, an oven - and there is tolerance and perfect peace at the most important event of community life: the church festivals.

Everyone willingly offers chickens or ducks for the festival. (This is not called sacrifice, but the givers' feelings are ancient and holy.) Everybody who eats sausages and kraut, coffee and cake at the festival feels the conviction that he is doing so *ad maiorem Dei gloriam* - to the greater glory of God. Earthly and heavenly pleasures are united, as on rare occasions. Clarinets, trumpet, and drum produce sounds to accompany the dancing. *Cachaça* is not poured down the throat viciously, but is drunk with pious dedication, because the profit goes for bells, rugs for the altar's steps, and windowpanes. Nobody seems bothered by the multiplicity of ways leading to Heaven. The anniversary of the arrival of the first German settlers, July 25th, belongs to everybody - the churches take turns in celebrating it. If chickens are roasted on Luther's spit this July, it's the Pope's pan that will fry them next year.

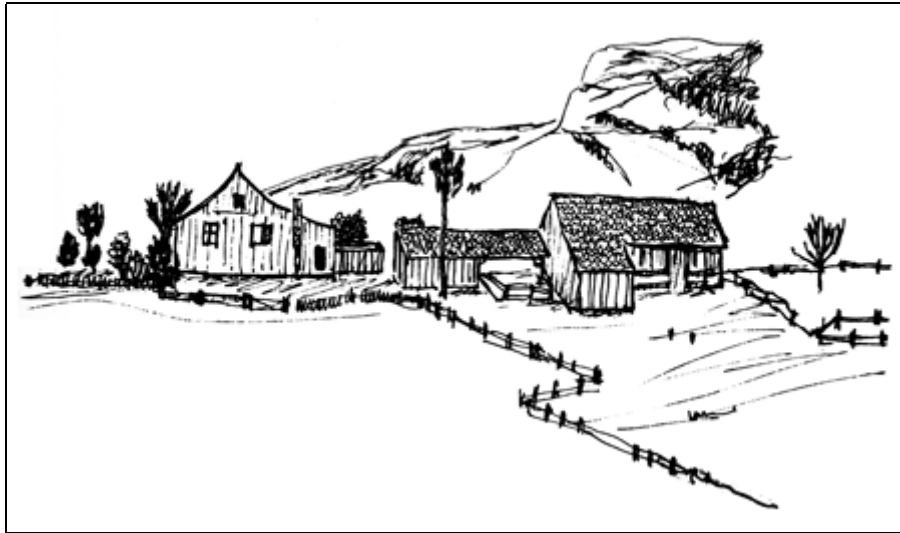
The church hill rises steeply. The road curves around in a sharp bend, and the valley stretches away at one's feet. State and church no longer accompany the traveler. From here on there is a long stretch - an endless stretch by European standards - on which every colonist is his own sovereign, every *rancho* is a castle. The colonist swinging down from his own horse to stand on his own land is no less proud than the *eques romanus*.

Men who do not take orders - are there a few left on our planet? He who has never been fingerprinted, has never filled out a blank, never written his name on a list, is not to be found in telephone directories - he who has never worn a uniform, a badge, never listened to a master's word, let alone sworn to obey it - may know little, may have less, but he has a degree of human dignity which is very rare.

It is easier to open the gates of a town than its doors. The doors of the houses here have no locks, but seldom is anybody allowed to enter. The custom of calling doctors to the dying is responsible (otherwise what would the neighbors say?) for my having crossed many a threshold. The sick still able to walk come into my office; children are carried in. The necessity for entering a house seldom arises.

Anyhow, I know the gardens with their roses and uncounted dahlias ... dahlias and gladioli are South American flowers and it is evident that they are at home in this place. The richness of their colors honors the castles. Left to themselves dahlias outgrow houses; their big bushes shine through the landscape in April and May. The gladiolus of the valley is pink. "The Mennonites brought them," I hear. "They are terribly active people, they work their way up,

then move to more prosperous places, but wherever they were, you find these rose gladioli.” The housewives exchange bulbs, and there are also white ones now, big yellow ones, and I brought the reds with yellow centers from a faraway *fazenda*. Much of the forest has disappeared under ax and fire, but its fire-red amaryllis stays on in the gardens. You may attach the most beautiful orchids (or the most precious ones - what does the one who finds them know about values?) to your pear tree, and they thrive wonderfully if they are not too exposed to sunshine. One of the secrets of the forest was its secret garden.



I know a house where the sitting room outdoes in greenery all the millionaires' hothouses of São Paulo. The strangest green leaves play surrealist games, ferns of lost geologic periods grow into shapes like fossils, climbing plants hide the boards and the walls, and the lady of the house dedicates her spare time, left in spite of milking, capeening, and handling manure, to the noble sport of cultivating orchids.

In Donna Irma you may enter a house through the sitting room or the kitchen. The first thing the city dweller notices is the spaciousness of the house. Brazil is so big that she leaves room enough for kitchens and living rooms. We all have, we discover, a craving for space, as we crave food and sleep. Small rooms make one feel as though in prison (unless imagination, books, or music open up the walls). City dwellers eat vitamin pills, and do not notice that the only thing they lack is space. Houses steal the space in the open; furniture steals it inside. The wooden houses are roomy. The trees were tall, the boards are long. Some of the trees were so tall that boards made of them are able to accept a dozen children - a fact that will confirm the belief of those who cherish the idea of a prestabilized harmony in the world.

The living room of the tropical Donna Irma house holds, like the *atrium* of old Romans, where the figures of the ancestors were kept, the pale photographs of married couples, dead children, faraway sons. Dogs of china and paper flowers should symbolize art and signify poverty. Technical progress is represented, if at all, by two machines: the sewing machine and the radio. The German settlers are not particularly fond of noise, and the set, which if let loose shouts commercials and Carnival songs, is mostly switched off.

The kitchen, which in modern flats has shrunk to microscopic proportions, if it does not gobble up the dining room, is mighty. The hearth is enormous; so are the chunks of wood to feed it, and so is the pot full of manioc roots (at the German homes), of polenta (at Italian homes), or of small black beans (at the homes of those who have become completely Brazilian). The sausages and pieces of bacon hanging above the hearth are oversize.

Bedrooms fill the space between kitchen and living room. The beds represent, like organ pipes, all possibilities. When anyone has slept through the whole row of them, from the small soprano cot to the outsize bass bed, he might as well build a house of his own and a row of beds for its expected tenants. The linen is clean, because almost everybody washes his feet in the evening, and those who don't "do like my neighbor," as a patient told me. "He puts all his children into sacks, except Saturdays. Then they also wash."

There are no writing desks ... but this is not peculiar to my valley. They are lacking in most city apartments; it seems that only ladies with literary ambitions allow themselves the luxury of having one, or people who wish to put things in the desk drawers or to group photographs, rare minerals, and precious lamps on the desk. Gentlemen write or dictate in their offices. Typewriters have their own desks, just as they have their own paper and write their own style.

Books are also lacking. We have known for a long time that they have fates. If we accept the reasoning of a modern psychologist, they also have will power, because fate is something everyone chooses for himself. Books gather around people who read them; they seem to rush to the one who needs them. The colonist certainly does not. He may have a Bible. It is a holy book and it is good to have it in the house. But it contains so many unknown words! The grandparents understood many of them, but they did not use them in the house or in clearing the forest. It is difficult to explain to a third-generation Brazilian what a king is - let alone a Pharaoh! And what were Jews? People like the *Indios*? Or like the Germans? They all speak German in Luther's Bible, so they could not be quite like the Botocudos. Young men from the region who have served with the United Nations' Suez battalion in the Gaza Strip confirm this, pointing out that some Jews today do not speak German any more. Be that as it may, the Bible is a very difficult book and does not become simpler when the minister tries to explain it.

Italians have no books at all. Brazilians rarely have one and if they do it is *The True Cross of Caravaca*. If they cannot read it themselves they ask a neighbor to come and read it aloud. It contains the formulas for spells and charms for all sorts of ailments. It is written in a mixture of pidgin-Portuguese, dog-Latin, and (at a guess) Swahili. Pronounced in the right way, while lighting the right candles and burning the right herbs, the magic verses ease many a pain. Sometimes (as in cases of multiple sclerosis) the effect is certainly not inferior to conventional treatments. In a practical way, the book contains special charms for "undiagnosed illness" and cases "where the patient has something other than what you think."

Pictures are not lacking entirely. The *escrivão* has one of President Vargas. After an inquiry about murder and corruption in his immediate circle, Vargas committed suicide, but his photograph, with medals and scarf, still offers a dignified decoration for an office. In Roman Catholic homes there are Madonnas, smiling and distributing rosaries, even to those standing in flames as high as the navel while serving time in purgatory. St. Anthony, the Portuguese saint, who made a career in Padua, St. Sebastian with arrows everywhere, like early settlers attacked by *Indios*, are apt to be found, and even St. George, recent victim of a more thorough historical investigation, keeps happily fighting the fire-spitting dragon, while St. Margaret hopefully waits. (Evidently the Holy Office is as powerless against St. George as the dragon himself.) Pictures distributed by soft-drink companies hang side by side with the saints, probably because they are artistically on a very similar level.

Once upon a time there was also an artist, a painter, in this region and his pictures survive. In my attempts to look for the past under the ferns I also tried to find information about the person, life, and views of painter Heinz. I learned the following, which I noted in the conviction that earnest historians could not gather much more information: he was a former Austrian Army officer, and he came after the First World War. For as long as he was painting a house he lived and had his meals there. The handle of his walking stick was the beak of a

tucano; he had made his purse himself of porcupine skin. He drank. His wife left him. Then he drank even more and finally died. That's not too much, but we know even less about Homeros or the life of the actor Shakespeare. I doubt if that much will be known about myself ten years after my death. Work is the thing, and the artist's life is at best a commentary on his work. Painter Heinz had a great quality: he was sincere. He did not want to paint "a picture," but a house, a sawmill, a clearing, and a cow, a black-red-yellow *tucano* - the figures a bit stiff, with as many colors as he had tubes. He painted truthfully. Collecting "primitives" is a modern hobby. I would advise speculators to arrange an exhibition of "Heinz, the painter of the forest," to invent an attractive biography for him, and to film it. The dead Austrian officer could obtain his ten lines in Thieme's *Lexicon of Artists*. I am fond of his pictures and would not abduct them from the environment they describe without the pretension to interpret it. Painter Heinz, the drunkard, lives through his pictures - *dignum laude virum Musa vetat mori*.

XIII

Following the road around the hill on which the Catholic church stands, and looking out down the valley as far as its faraway bends and small rolling hills allow, I recognize the roofs of the houses below me with a feeling of joy - a feeling certainly akin to that felt by transplanted trees when their roots gain firm ground again.

On the left side of the road, a few steps up the hill, I see the house of the barber. It can be seen and heard from far away: the radio set shouts from within it, and if it pauses for a while there is the voice of the barber, his loud "Ha! Ha!" - the laughter of a man who has mastered life.

Pericles is illiterate. For the European who has always lived among persons able to write it is worthwhile to make his acquaintance. Pericles cuts my hair, or rather the remnant of it left by half a century of existence. "He capeens my head," I might write for those who have already acquired a notion of everyday Catarinese.

To capeen heads is a profession German settlers are not attracted by. It belongs to the Portuguese, like running *espresso* bars. Barbers' salons, bars, and groceries are the last fortresses of the once mighty, now decaying, Portuguese empire.

Aldomiro, we already know, represents the illiterate's viewpoint in only a secondary way. He is first of all a civil servant. But Pericles represents only himself. He abhors the paper world of unrealities and prefers the only real world, and capeens heads because it is fun - and because barbers work in the shadow, have fresh water at their disposition, and do not wear out their well-fitting shoes too quickly.

An illiterate is one who gets life firsthand. His relation to readers and writers is like that of the colonist whose wife gets the chicken from the coop and the vegetables from the garden to cook the soup, and who, in the scented vapors of the broth, invites Jesus Christ to be his guest, and the town dweller who empties a paper bag with a hen printed on it into hot water.

Mankind did not need books for several hundreds of thousands of years, and then devised an alphabet to write something about the Golden Age in which writing had not yet been invented. The unlucky being of the Iron Age reads about things he should smell, touch, taste with his tongue; books occupy him; he loses the ability to see with his own eyes.

In Pericles' salon I think about Ludwig Curtius, the German archeologist in Rome. The last day of his life a student came to see him (very much like the student in Goethe's *Faust*, I - poor bookworm - immediately recall) and asked him about the best method of studying archeology. Curtius told him, "Do read, young man, do read a great deal! One only sees what one knows already." Pericles would say, "Ha! ha!" if I had the words to transmit this to him.

The fates and opinions of others do not stand between his sound senses and the world. He ran around here as a little boy and took a good look at the world. Then he came to his master, a barber who taught him the seriousness of life: he swept the hairs away and collected them in a sack. Later he learned to cut hair - the tails and manes of horses, to begin with. The first customer he shaved, a lazy old beggar, he had to treat every time to a glass of *cachaça*. Ha-ha! Then he learned - ha! - to curl the girls' hair. That is a profession for you! You get around almost everywhere. He was in Ipuranga and Aparecida, in New Rostock and New Lubeck, in all places. And there were girls everywhere, and curling hair you learn where you may put your hand. Ha-ha! There are German girls and Italian girls, and down there, at the coast, where bananas grow - Ha-ha-ha-ha! - there are the black ones. No need to curl their hair; it is curly. Indio girls have smooth, waveless hair. A beautiful black. Ha-ha.

It is not so easy to listen to Pericles' autobiography - his radio set, no, two sets, squawk, bellow, and shout. "Two are nicer," says Pericles. One sings, the other talks; you listen now to one and now to the other. Sometimes there is talking on both sets; it sounds as though they were quarreling ... that's a real scream. If one happens to be in a sad mood - ha! - the other one stages its carnival. You have to make noise. What else are the ears made for?

Now Pericles wants to buy a trumpet and to join in.

I save my haircuts for occasions - they come often - when there is no electricity. Sometimes there is no water in the stream, or so much that it carries off both conduit and generator or, quite simply, the owner of the power station may go to see his mother-in-law and switch the whole thing off. Then all I hear is the voice of Pericles, "And I married the nicest of the lot! Every day she cooks rice and black beans for me! And chicken on Sunday! Ha-ha!"

Pericles also gets his food firsthand. Beans grow on his own field, rice at his brother-in-law's; he is Italian and only in Italy can you learn how to plant rice. There is no book of recipes between Pericles and the things that keep him alive.

"*Gosto do barulho*, I love noise," he says. "How come you don't?"

I cannot explain it to him. How can I tell him that I was the contemporary of battles whose artillery thundered menacingly about me from newspapers and books? I am a poor devil who has lost the sense of the values of life ... I wouldn't enjoy rice and beans every day; I have read about Never Never Land ... I can't get along with the girls who come out of the forest to have their hair curled ... I enjoy acoustic waves only if Johann Sebastian Bach has put them into a certain order.

Pericles is far richer than I. He has only a few paintings, but all originals. I have a whole lot, but almost all reproductions.

"I'm old," I said. "That's why I hate noise."

Pericles regards me with astonishment.

"I like music because of the noise it makes. Ha-ha!" he shouts.

I quicken my steps when I have passed the barber's and hurry to the next curve in the road.

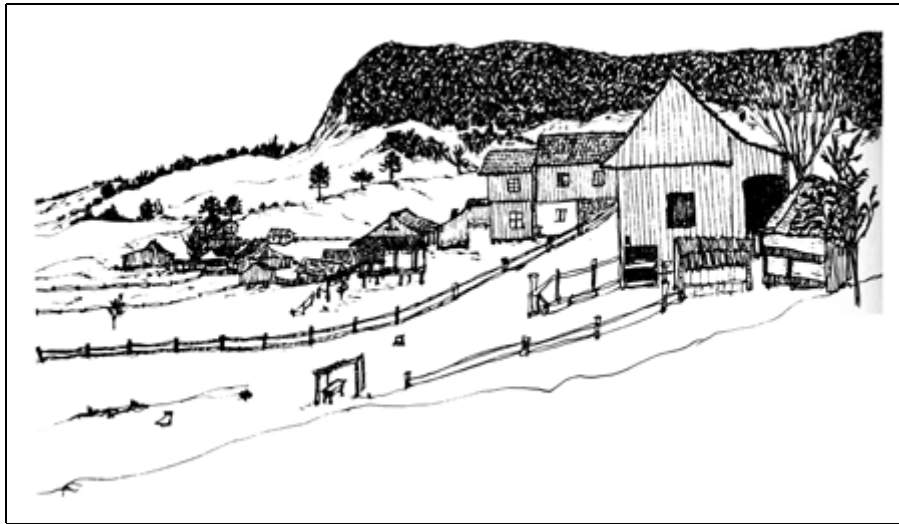
From here I see the house that I call the Breakfast House; I entered it for the first time during breakfast, at nine in the morning. This does not mean that the seven members of the family got up so late, nor that they were taking their first meal. You get up when the sun stirs the low clouds which sleep on the edges of the *serra* by night - at five or six - and that's the time for black coffee, sausage, and bread. The work has to be done - you do not feel that you deserve more, and you drink your coffee standing by the fire. By nine, however, the cows are milked, the milk is carried away, the house is clean, a nice piece of field work is done. That's the right moment to sit down.

There are five boys at the Breakfast House and no girl. In such cases the mother sometimes considers herself the servant of all the lords and masters, working for them day and night. Not in this family. She just distributes the chores: washing, mending, sweeping, preparing breakfast ... they are not detrimental to the dignity of a man, nor has the dignity of the father suffered by the brawl in the tavern or the fact that he was badly beaten up - the reason for my appearing in the morning with ointments and dressings.

It has often been said that our feelings are determined by early impressions. Perhaps it's true. But there are events in later life that leave no lesser mark - for example, if someone has suffered hunger for two or three years. I have lived through the experience and I keep trying in vain to salvage the lost meals. One of the daily, indelible traces of hungry years (weeks or

months of starvation can probably be eaten away from the memory) is a feeling of astonishment at a plentiful meal.

The sun shone into the Breakfast House and licked honey. There was a big open dish of honey that smelled sweet, like certain herbs in the forest. The jars full of coffee on the table were as mighty as those of milk. There were sausages and cheese, ham and bacon, cold meat, and for the parrot, caught nearby, there was cornmeal and milk in a cup. Father, mother, the five boys, and the parrot ate very calmly, for a long time, in solemn silence. Then, when they finally realized that their zeal was in vain, that they could not finish milk, coffee, bread, meat, and honey, they sighed helplessly and gave it up, one after the other.



Then there is the house I call Fatherland House. “Fear not, beloved fatherland” is inscribed on the frame of a large photograph. It is a rare and beautiful picture, and I doubt if other copies of it could be located anywhere. Half a century has passed since the Braunschweiger Battalion lined up in front of the photographer just before returning to civilian life. The Kaiser ruled over there at that time, the Botocudos ruled here. And today ... today the picture hangs here in the sitting room, and the girls, waiting for permanent waves (the great step between confirmation and first ball) to be given them by the lady of the house in the adjoining room, contemplate it.

The privates sit or squat in the first row, the noncommissioned officers standing at regular intervals between them. Bearded giants with flags stand at the right and left; they wear super-high boots like students in traditional attire, or statues of Bismarck, and their helmets are equally high, their beards equally long. Above a layer of clouds (the photographer evidently knew the art of combining negatives and had information about the hierarchical order of the seven choirs of the angels) there are the lower ranks of shoulder-knot bearers, among them warriors with *Pickelhaube* (spiked helmets), of whose function in the picture and the Army I am unaware. A tent (or canopy) marks the center of the composition. The commander in person looks earnestly, severely, but at the same time with the dignity of a benevolent judge, down at the spectator. At his side, ready to accept orders or to draw their swords, are the officers of his staff. Above their heads the heavens open up wide - to the left barracks and field guns in the clouds, to the right endless rows of defenders of the fatherland and a group of very high-ranking officers on horseback. The first of them wears a golden eagle on a silver helmet, his cloak flying in the wind ... no doubt of it, it is he, His Majesty, the Emperor. “Fear not...”

I stood with so much respectful attention, for such a long time, before the photograph, that the lady of the house noted it. “That’s from Grandfather,” she said. “He is one of them, sitting in the first row. He often showed the picture to the children and said: ‘Look, that’s the way things are in Germany. That is the eternal Germany.’”

"The grandfather was absolutely right," I said.

I call the next house the Sad House. If I were to judge only by the trees, I would say it was a many-sided character who lived there. There are proud palm trees, hiding shy mandarins, tamarisks, and pears. But the children are so sad, as though they had been brought up in a slum, as though there weren't three dozen pigs waiting to be roasted for their pleasure. The mother is well aware of it. "The little one is always sorry. He had his twin sister. The doctor in the hospital said at once she should be operated on. When she was three she died all of a sudden. He is always looking for her." I realize that there are no words to describe this early widowhood. The mother is seeking for words to tell me about her own sorrow. "The other boy was eight, goodhearted and obedient. He used to play between the house and the barn...." She describes the tragedy as great poets would - she begins with a situation apparently safe and calm, which, however, contains the seeds of a tragedy. "There were workmen in the courtyard and they were stringing the electric wires. A few wires hung loose." She pauses, because telling a story means living everything over again, and events might take another turn this time. The workmen could take care of those loose wires ... but "The electrician went away; it was already dark." There was one more moment of undisturbed happiness. Everything could have ended well. "The boy came back into the kitchen and said, 'I am going out to play a little more'" - then tragedy broke in. "When I looked after him he had already fallen. He had only touched the wire." The boy was dead. Sometimes the mother goes to the churchyard and tears out the ferns, which grow and regrow. Sometimes there comes a stranger, like me, who has not yet heard the story and she tells it, hoping it will turn out in a different way.... But the house has become a sad house and nothing will change it any more.

I see between two araucaria pines - perhaps the last living things that witnessed the arrival of the colonists - the shingled roof of the House of Tall Stories. The Bavarian widower who lives there deserves to be named, because he did not cut the pines down - and because he talks with such a convincing accent. I have not forgotten his story, and should I ever return to Europe again I shall follow his example and include it in my recollections. If you tell such a story often enough, adding, "May I drop dead if it isn't true!" you'll soon be convinced yourself that things went exactly that way and no differently.

I am glad to have heard this story. There are so few who are able to tell one today! Professor Curtius, always curious as he was, hunting for new faces and new ideas, liked to invite people in and to surprise them suddenly with the command, "Tell me a story!" The one who could not was lost. He was never invited again. "How old are you? Forty? And never lived through an interesting event?" It was a final judgment; no rank, no title could alter it. "Interesting things always happen to interesting people," he used to say.

The Bavarian would have passed the examination. He is always waiting - not for someone to tell him a story, but for people who are willing to listen to his. A slight case of bronchitis gave me an opportunity to hear it.

"It was about thirty years ago - may I drop dead if it wasn't - at the time things got started around here. When you wanted to buy a cow or a horse you could not simply buy one from your neighbor; you had to travel to Lages, up to the *Kampland*, the high, broad grazing country. The pine trees had been cleared away there for a long time; all was pastures, lots of cattle ... often thousands on one *fazenda*. You had to drive your cow all the way back; there were no roads. Where the forest started you went through the *picada* [trail]. There was no little danger - in one boot you carried the money, in the other your gun ... and another gun in your belt. No joke - may I drop dead if it was one!

“I set out before Christmas, in spite of the heat, because the days are longer then, and soon I am halfway. Always across the *mato*, bushes and forest. I am thirsty and - *puxa vida!* - What a life! - my bottle is empty. There, where two huts are two hours apart, if you are lucky.

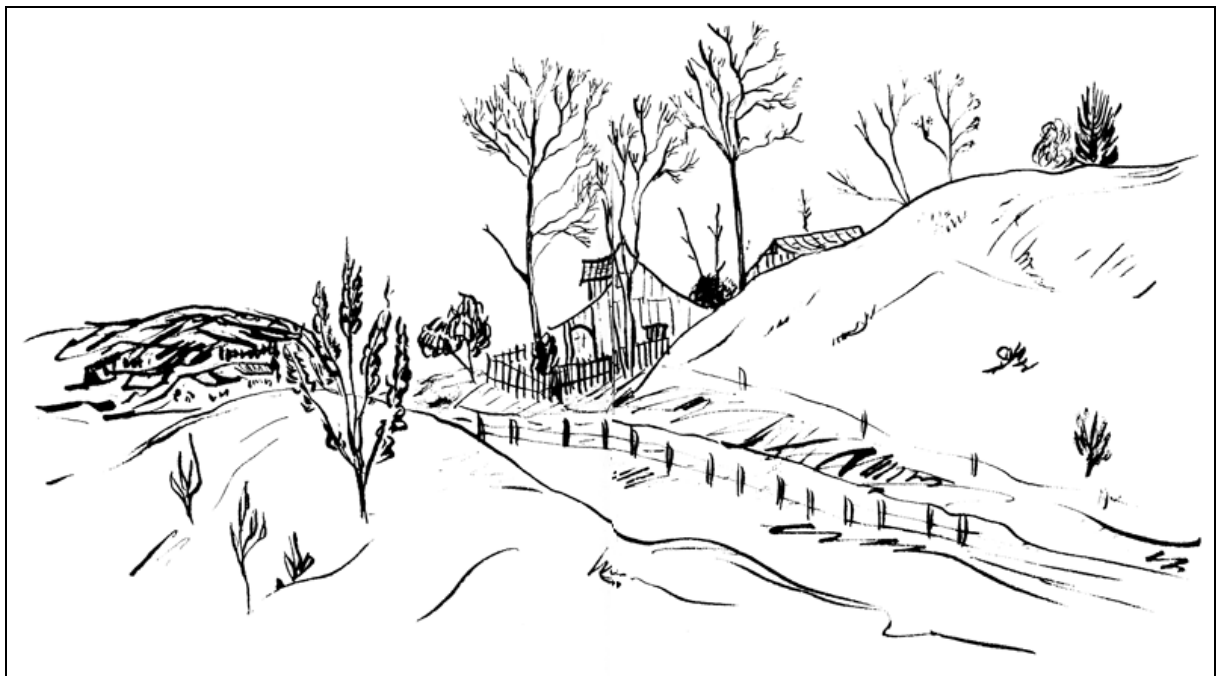
“Well, I am lucky, there is a hut. A real *rancho* that *caboclos* used to live in. Know what they say? ‘If work would be any good the rich would have kept it for themselves.’ They do little and drink much. ‘Never mind,’ I say, clapping my hands.”

(Here I must note that our “I knock on the door,” has no sense in Brazil. Even if a *rancho*, barn, or hut should be provided with a door, the man living inside is a descendant of those whose life was not lived behind doors. Neither the Indian nor the Negro, who was transported against his every intention into this eternal land of the future one hundred or two hundred years ago, knew the complicated technical invention which calls for boards, joints, and knobs. If you get to a house and wish to enter - it might be a modern villa in São Paulo - you clap your hands patiently until somebody arrives.)

“‘Eh!’ I shout, ‘A-eh, would you do me a favor? A-eh! I want a drink of water!’ and then I listen.

“‘Just wait!’ a voice says. Evidently an old woman with a sore throat is speaking. ‘Chico gets you water!’ And so it happens. Out of the hut comes a *macaco* with a *cuja*.”

(I can’t help interrupting and commenting again. *Macaco* is the Portuguese word for all monkeys, and the *cuja* is a sort of squash which through the grace of God already grows in the shape of Italian wine bottles, so that the man in the forest shall not lack a mouthful of cool water. The dry shell of this squash makes plates for rice and beans, small ones make cups, big ones bottles; all sorts of pots and pans grow every spring whenever you have dropped a single *cuja* seed.)



“The *macaco* comes slowly, cautiously, and brings the water. I say, ‘*Muito obrigado, Excellencia*’ - ‘Thank you very much, Your Excellency’ - as he deserves, and I drink. You don’t get such clean, fresh water in every *rancho*. Some fetch their water from the river and do not see the pigs taking their bath upstream, and cook with it. True, they drink *cachaça* if they are thirsty.

“I give the *cuja* back to the monkey and repeat, ‘*Obrigado*’ - ‘thank you.’ And then I think: wouldn’t those people have a bit to eat? Riding through the *mato*, the wilderness, you live on cornbread and cheese for days. Perhaps those people have black beans for good money!

“I shout again, ‘A-eh! You got something to eat? I have money! I pay!’

“The old woman with the sore throat cries, ‘No! I can’t give you anything!’

“I ask, ‘Have you really nothing?’

“The old woman croaks, ‘There is nobody at home!’

“‘Hell’s fire!’ I say, ‘that silly witch! Hasn’t she got a better excuse than saying there is nobody at home?’

“‘I want to pay!’ I cry again. ‘Just a leftover beefsteak!’

“‘Nobody at home!’ she stubbornly repeats.

“I lose my temper, I dismount, and go to the *rancho* - the monkey jumping nervously at my side all the time. I say, ‘*Licencia*’ - ‘if you don’t mind’ - I look through the window, and - may I drop dead if it isn’t true - there really was nobody at home.”

I couldn’t believe it and I asked, “Well, who on earth had been speaking? Where was the old woman?”

My patient had evidently expected the question. I had not quite finished asking when the triumphant reply came: “The parrot! The little green parrot! May I drop dead if ... no, there was nobody else at home!”

XIV

Walking from the pharmacy to my house I follow the road, which with all its turns and curves seems to be designed for those who take a walk on Sundays - for those who are in no hurry and would like to contemplate the *serra* from many different angles. It was no engineer who laid out the road. It shows roughly where the first trail crossed the forest, running around a hillside or a group of trees, connecting one *rancho* with another, looking for an easier ascent on the walls of the *serra* ... the road faithfully follows the old trail even if it goes through pastures instead of forests and is shaded only by occasional pear trees.

By now I know every step of the way: the swamp by the wayside with ibislike, croaking birds called "pasture witches" and brown "water hens"; the wild, almost tasteless, light-red raspberries; the small, shivering banana trees, always hopefully planted, but which always freeze to death when winter comes to refresh the immigrants' memories of "over there" - and houses again. In one I saw an arrow point chiseled by the Indians - blue at the base, red in the middle, black at the point, a precious jewel. In another I saw a woman, one of the rare beings whose name has become a geographic denomination. One of the nearby valleys is named after Mrs. Anna - the Anna Valley. Still she, who seems to have a guaranteed immortality, knows that there is only one safe way to be remembered: not to die. She is ninety and still alive. Far off the road I recognize the red roof of the house I call the Historical House. The grandfather who lives there fights the battles of the First World War over again when he returns from capeening. He knows very little about the second one, only that "it was no real war at all ... bombs were dropped upon men who were really sitting ducks, there was no trench line, and a corporal commanded generals!... The First War was the real one, Hindenburg's headquarters were in Laon." I am old too and I remember the times when the defenders of holy frontiers had swords and illusions, and my friend enjoyed informing me about the various battles around the Chemin des Dames. He assured me that I was one of the very few who knew how to appreciate their importance. "It was our battery that took the Cathedral of Rheims under fire. Those French really raised hell about it!" I had never before had such a sense of standing before a historical personage. How much had been written about the bombardment by people who had not seen the towers through a field glass, who did not load the gun themselves. And here was a witness of the event, ready to say that he had been present. "Ludendorff was right when he said, 'Taking Rheims, we would have won the war!'" Then he returned to the cathedral again: "It was a real pity for the old shop. You can build such a church again, but it will never be the same. What could you do about it? Orders are orders!" "Orders are orders!" I have only heard this said once on this side of the water. Then, all of a sudden, I realized it was the grandfather who had protested so loudly that, in burning the worms, his outhouse had burned down!

Going ahead I see pastures and *aipi* fields and the rolling ground between road and *serra*. Where the hillsides become too steep for cornfields and tobacco the forest stands guard; after so many lost battles it fights a rear-guard action to defend the stone walls of the *serra*.

The untouched forest of Santa Catarina has no tropical features. In Caesar's time most of Europe must have been covered by such a forest, by trees covered with moss and mistletoe. Here every tree is a garden in itself and provides space for uncounted plants and flowers, of which the orchids are by no means the most colorful. Who plants the amaryllis with its flaming red flowers right in the crowns of the highest trees? The natives pretend it is the Sacy - a one-legged, all-black little devil wearing a red cap, smoking a pipe, and jumping over everything. From the treetops a second forest grows - a counterpoint in green - toward the

soil. Trailers, suckers, runners weave an inextricable texture. Storms uproot trees, which then lean like slanting bridges into the crowns of others. The green color is eternal. The seasons are indicated by color signals. Yellow trees flame up sometimes, violet ones later, then fire-red patches emblazon the branches. The scent is always the same. In the warm season the breath of the forest becomes cooler.

The forest is a living place and I know a few of its inhabitants. The big blue butterflies, for example. At times they leave their realm to dance a ballet for a passer-by. If one knew their wings only by the trinkets made of them, one could hardly imagine across what distances they shine. Oversized white butterflies tumble like the forgotten handkerchiefs of vanished ghosts through gigantic *bambus* in damp places. Flowery places particularly attract the butterfly ballets. Their wings change according to fashion and season. Red caterpillars with sputnik heads and soft green, serpentlike ones with poisonous stings are the ballerinas' ancestors. "Heinz, the painter, knew how they are related," I hear as a final touch to his portrait. There is still a foxlike animal in the forest, the "forest dog," and there are splendid, spotted ocelots, the little brothers of the panthers. They like to leave the forest at dawn to hunt chicken and often end tragically as bedroom carpets. On Saturdays, during house-cleaning, they lie across the window sill and view the forest again. There are still a few small monkeys. The Botocudos had no inhibitions about recognizing them as the younger brothers of man. Their excited conversation certainly has human, I would almost say diplomatic, traits. They too have social tendencies: they know how to break an ear of corn and to gnaw it off; they appreciate manioc roots and they enjoy a nice Sunday morning. Only the small green parrots, the *piriquitos*, are more loquacious. They too are fond of corn. Men, monkeys, and *piriquitos* sometimes meet at the rim of the forest to decide to whom the corn shall belong. Lacking more convincing arguments, man appears with his rusty shotgun and continues the work of diplomacy with different means.

Serpents sometimes leave the forest. The "big ones" are rare by now, like the "*cipo* snake" and the "lead snake"; they continue to grow in the tales of the old colonists. They were not poisonous and their skins made beautiful trophies. The wicked *jararacas* and *jaracuçus* (they have kept their Indian names) lead far from easy lives. The colonist does not fear them and slays them with his wooden slippers. They report that *jararacas* devour their young in case of danger, and regurgitate them again. They are reputed to give birth to living young and to retire into an ant's nest for the delivery. Snakes are legendary beings. "The very old ones have crowns on their heads, or maybe moss grows there."

If snakes can boast of their biblical old age, lizards could brag of their geological ancestors. The smallest are exact models of the saurians which a long time ago ruled the world. The bigger ones, and the biggest of all, with their green heads, are cousins of the vanished monarchs. The dinosaurs, I have read somewhere, had an invincible system for attack and defense: their gigantic mass of muscles. But at a certain weight the intestines could not provide enough nourishment to the instruments of world domination, and they declined, in spite of boundless voracity. They disappeared as if a catastrophe had devoured them. Only the more modest relatives survive - a fact which, in view of the present armaments situation and the small monkeys mentioned above, should not be overlooked by politicians.

Birds fly and glide over the forest: the hawk, the Stukalike elegant hunter, plummeting from incredible heights to get a frog or a chicken; and the black *urubu*, indicating with his lugubrious series of *ooohs* his unpleasant business. He is the gravedigger of the forest, the uninvited guest when a hog is slaughtered or *churrasco* is being prepared. *Urubus*, the valley's carrion crows, do not enjoy much sympathy, but their flight is marvelous.

Most of the territory the forest lost went to the pastures. "There are as many cows as inhabitants," I heard, and this sentence seems to me, haunted as I am by all the evil spirits of ghastly hunger, like celestial music. The cows are Dutch. They are the pride of their owners. Once I drew a house by the wayside and showed my drawing to the owner. He was not enthusiastic about my masterpiece. "The house - yes - the garden - not bad - but it looks as if I hadn't a single cow on my grassland! Try to do better next time!" The cow feeds the man, the horse makes him proud. The crucial dilemma of our days, "butter or guns," has been decided here definitely in favor of the butter.

It is a half-hidden roof that reminds me of this fact: in that house I examined a dignified grandmother of considerable weight. The murmurs of her heart sounded bad, her arterial pressure was too high. She had to lose sixty pounds and I had to explain it to her. To talk about metabolism, calories, and cholesterol wouldn't have made sense, and I decided to tell her simply what she should eat.

"Coffee and bread for breakfast."

"With butter?" she asked.

"No."

"With fat?"

"No."

"With cold roast pork?"

"No."

"With sausage?"

"No."

She saw what I meant, straightened up and said scornfully, "Old as I am, I haven't eaten dry bread!"

I was deeply ashamed, because I have....

The road snakes along moodily through clearing and forest. I look at capeening girls with their broad-brimmed straw hats and fowl whose black, red, and greenish feathers justify the modern painters, until at a narrow bend I see, as a red spot in the green, far from the road the roof of the house which I am always astounded to call my own. From here on my sandals (my only means of transportation) shift to a speedier pace and I see less of the surroundings.

Before I catch sight of the bamboos I planted as a curtain between my pasture and the road, I pass the midwife's house. I could also call it the obstetrical clinic of the valley; there are sometimes two or three women in labor in the small, half-rotten shack behind unpruned pear trees.

Mrs. Plinz started her obstetrical career before I came here, in a time which left but a few written testimonials of the events, so that my account may turn out as little trustworthy as that of historians who reconstruct the happenings from fragments of inscriptions.

"Her husband," they whisper, "was a milk-cart driver" - which means, as previously explained, a man of dignity. They had horses, but only two meager cows and a pitiful pasture. The neighbors were all better off; every day they sent two, three, or even four twenty-liter jars to Braun.... Plying to and fro, Mr. Plinz must have had plenty of time to ponder about the unequal distribution of goods in the world. "The more equally consumer goods are distributed, the more equitable the system," his conclusion would have been, had he known the complex

verbiage of the social sciences. He reached his conclusion by means of an original system of thinking and should be considered as a social philosopher among milk drivers, who otherwise only transmit news. In order to eliminate unequal distribution in his particular case, he invented a method similar to those applied on a larger scale by very honorable institutions: he adopted a standard of a pint to every trip and used it for the transfer of milk from other cans into his own. He followed the principle tax experts have used in many a state in recent times: in order to approach the ideal state of an equal distribution of goods and money, he took much more from the cans of the wealthy than from those of the poor.

Unfortunately, not even the experts on national economics have managed to agree as to whether “equitable” and “equal” can be considered synonymous in such cases. To those who do not believe so the owners of the milk cans belonged without exception. There happened to be not a single adherent to Plinz’s milk-distribution method among them. “How does Plinz get four full jars of milk every day from his two skinny cows?” asked the employee at storekeeper Braun’s skimming machine. “Why did you credit me this month with thirty pints less than last month?” his suppliers asked him.

There was no need of a master detective to unravel the mystery of the missing milk. The bold reformer lost dignity, salary, title, and opportunities and nothing was left but the nickname “Can-Milker.” He hates to hear it and leaves his *colonia* only to go fishing sometimes under the densest bushes along the brook.

In the moments of his disgraceful downfall, his wife recalled that she had once been a charwoman in a hospital where, besides scrubbing, she had carried hot water into the delivery room, and had occasionally given a hand to the midwife there. Now she had to find new foundations for the family’s existence. So she bought string, and scissors to cut the navel cord, asked her son the cobbler to write MIDWIFE upon a piece of board with black pitch, and had the board nailed to the pear tree next to the road.

Revolutions change only the masters of palaces. The porters the doorkeepers, stay on. The safest professions are those that guard the portals: midwife and gravedigger. Mrs. Plinz had calculated better than her husband. That “equal” and “equitable” are synonyms is doubtful. But there is no question what “in love” means, and what the consequences of this state usually are.

Besides severing the navel cord, Mrs. Plinz has learned a very useful term, “pencil in.” The cobbler, who knows the alphabet, writes it on a piece of paper; the bus brings penicillin from the pharmacy in Tenente Gregorio. The children get the “pencil in” for all types of flu - the dry flu, the wet flu, the interior flu and the skin flu, also the flu “that sits in the gland so that the child loses his appetite.” The injection helps unless the child has been bewitched. In such cases the child is sent for consultation to Mrs. Plinz’s friend in Tenente Gregorio, who is also a specialist in charms to cure bewitched cattle. There is no room for reasonable doubt as to the scientific validity of her proceedings. Those who had raised hell because Mr. Plinz milked their cans now happily bring their milk money to Mrs. Plinz, the dispenser of the only authentic “pencil in” injections and flu shots.

All you have to do in order to succeed is to know your fellow beings. Mrs. Plinz knows them.

It is understandable that she is not particularly fond of me, the competitor. She calls me only if there is no other possible course - for example, “to bring the meachine³, which pumps the water out of a woman, who can’t,” as the herald on horseback very decently put it.

³ erratum: *machine*

The visit to Mrs. Plinz's private clinic was a rare and impressive experience for me.

As a kid I used to play in a park. The white marble statue of a gentleman stood in a corner of it, smiling down upon his children. He had a short beard under his chin and a long mustache. He looked very much like the great-granduncle in my mother's family album. He had a very funny - two very funny - names: "Ignaz" and "Simmelweiss." He was not riding, like most statue subjects, and had no lions around him, but some small naked children. Upon my inquiries as to who that funny uncle was, I found the only information about him was that he had recommended the washing of hands.

I considered it insufficient reason for obtaining a statue. Uncles, aunts, and nannies were all advocates of soap and water. Most grown-ups brought this topic up just when the games got exciting.

I learned much later why Ignaz Semmelweiss had been honored with a monument on a public square ... and I understood the reason why his statue survived those of kings, bishops, and prime ministers when these important personages left empty seats, rubble, or two big bronze boots - *nam quae saxo struuntur, si iudicium posterum in odium vertit pro sepulchris spernuntur*, says Tacitus.

Today, after having seen Mrs. Plinz's establishment, I again doubt that the doctor with the strange name deserved his glory. Mrs. Plinz's house has two doors, one facing the street, the other the court. "We are not superstitious," says Mrs. Plinz with a broad grin. "There are funny people; they believe you must go through the same door where you came in; otherwise you will take the luck out with you. Kricker in Bear Valley has only one door, so that that will never happen. In my house you may go in and out wherever you like."

No, Mrs. Plinz is not superstitious - which is rare around here. She only believes in the witches that really exist. But even if Dr. Semmelweiss should descend personally from his monument, climb through the mine fields and barbed wire of the Iron Curtain, cross the ocean, and come here and talk as enthusiastically as he used to and explain to Mrs. Plinz that washing hands brings luck, she would not believe a word of it. One has an apron so as to wipe one's hands on it, doesn't one?

Luck does not come and go through doors ... but the hens come flying through them and walk out or in again to look at the beings who hatch their young with so much pain; and when Mrs. Plinz interrupts her assistance in order to feed her pigs on schedule - for orderly ways must be maintained - only the silly ones run around the outside of the house; the smart little pigs know the shorter way and run, happily squeaking, through both doors to the trough. When they are fed and satisfied and when the pigsty is cleaned too, Mrs. Plinz rushes back to her patients.

The cobbler, who knows how to write "pencil in," hammers at his shoe heels. "Patience, dear lady," exclaims Mrs. Plinz. The *urubus*, the carrion crows, sit patiently on the *rancho* roof, knowing that a placenta will be flying through the window before long. The Can-Milker sits in the kitchen, where rice, black beans, and the syringe are cooked on the same fire, and smokes his corn cigar to chase the mosquitoes away. The old parrot waits even more patiently than the crows to have his cage cleaned (but you can't do everything at once, and the two cows have to be milked too). Every time I pass there, I feel that Semmelweiss exaggerated when he suggested washing the hands and scrubbing even the floors. Why lie to the newborn? Do they come into a clean world? Are they going to be surrounded by onlookers with filtered breath? Are they going to slumber in lily-white beds? I suppose Mrs. Plinz asks these questions when she brings coffee to her patients, cooked *aipi* to her pigs. She wipes her hands on her apron and her conscience is clean.

XV

It is only a few minutes' walk from the Plinzian Clinic to my house. From here I can already distinguish the individual boards in its walls.

I stop and take a deep breath, talking about my house, and I have to convince myself, first, that I am writing the truth. The house is not a dream. It stands two hundred paces from the road; there is a pasture in front of it; there are orange trees around it. The land belongs to me as far as the *serra* - four hectares, which have already borne good *aipi* and now have a handful of olive trees, a small vineyard, and a nut tree. To go with these I am going to plant red orange, chestnut, pear, and apple trees - all the fruits that can cure homesickness.

My house - I proudly say - has everything the others have. It is sometimes a Breakfast House, and milk, butter, and honey are ready on the table. It is sometimes a Sad House and sometimes my Fatherland House. There are Botocudo arrowheads in it. I love it.

It was easy to plan it. What more do you need to become an architect but space, boards, and bricks? Perhaps something else too: time, because time makes the trees grow around a house, and houses in the subtropics, like orchids, thrive best in the shade. Time must still provide rain gutters and paint. The dimensions of the hallway are such that there will be no difficulty about carrying my casket from the bedroom. I hope it will be carried out from a finished house.

When I lie now in the unfinished one on Sundays contemplating the ceiling, I am proud as a grandee of Spain. My own boards! We are all slaves of language; we all know that we may lose the ground underfoot in wars and tempests, but we seldom realize that on those occasions we may also lose the ceiling overhead. Twenty years of wandering mean nights without ceilings and under strange ceilings. If one who "seeks for the lost time" may reconstruct those ceilings from mosaic-like fragments of memory, find and interpret their rifts and spots, he may find once again the gesture that cleaned away their cobwebs, may find comparisons for their colors in moonlight and candlelight.

But the years of war, and those which came later and cannot very well be described as years of peace, were not such that one would care to meet them again as *temps retrouvé*. It seems highly questionable whether time, which after all is meant to pass, should ever be found again. Why should it? To be presented gilded with a respectable patina of lies? To tell the stories again and to elaborate them with such lofty literary skill that people listen to them with immobile teacups?

I view my ceiling and I am simply glad it is made of pine wood. It's a light, a clear, a good-smelling wood. The trees of our forest have beautiful names and one who has lived here long enough knows what they smell like - *olje* like oil, *canela* like cinnamon.

It does not help me very much to turn away from the path I have put behind me. If I lie long enough looking at the boards of the ceiling it is the lost time that finds me and asks, "Do you remember?"

I know. It did not begin. The beginning was a continuation, just as the end, the end of life, mankind, earth, and galaxy is but a prelude to continuation once more.... I know only that at a certain point in my life the ceiling which had stood guard between me and the four seasons disappeared, and I was looking up at the ceiling of a streetcar on the "C" line in Rome.

It is difficult enough to explain the difference between “dreaming” and “living in reality” as far as the present is concerned. Descartes showed long ago that there was no way to distinguish. All we know is: *cogito, ergo sum* - I think, therefore I am. As far as the past is concerned it seems just a little bit more difficult than impossible.

Was I really in Rome when the war started? (And was there really a World War in Europe?) My memories seem clear, but they might deceive me. They are certainly in contradiction to the logic of events. If there was a war I should have been drafted and in the Hungarian Army. If I stayed in Rome without money I should have starved; if I stayed without papers I should have been arrested.

From the perspective of the present I must admit that there is something wrong with logic - or with the events. I would almost rather say, with logic. Hungary had lost World War I and logically was not allowed to have conscription. Logic should have prevented her rulers from entering a second war on the wrong side. Logically, the kingdom without a king, ruled by an admiral without a navy, having fought Austria for four hundred years, should not have bowed before the Austrian corporal who had followed her emperors.

For the Italian authorities I should have been a deserter, somebody who had come into the Fascist state to avoid fighting for an allied nation. Could anyone, even by the most careful planning, in a state where every fourth grown-up male wore a uniform, was a policeman, a soldier, a militiaman - if not a plainclothes police informer - successfully pose as a “tourist in Italy”?

Is it logical, in a world where money is the yardstick, to live without it?

So by sheer reasoning I should presume that it was impossible. I simply could not pass the war in Rome, the capital of a country at war, just sitting in libraries, begging, writing, measuring blood pressure in the back room of a pharmacy.

Yet I have a sort of stubborn recollection that I did. I remember passing nights in streetcars. “C” means *Circolare*, the line that goes round and round again. The “CS” drove *ad sinistram*, to the left; the “CD”, *ad dextram*, to the right; but the “C” or *Circolare* always went around and around the old city walls and watchtowers. It was a matter of utmost indifference to me whether the *Circolare* ran right or left. I simply enjoyed the fact that the trip had no “last stop.” One could take this streetcar at one A.M. and ride through the night until four or five. In the year 1938 Europe was headed toward disaster, but the *Circolare* followed a wiser course: it went nowhere.

About four or five o’clock I exchanged this modest ceiling for an imposing one: in the fresco the entire baroque Heaven opened up to interrupt eternity for a solemn moment, to receive a saint. The choirs of the angels floated down playing harps and trumpets. They played inaudible music; they did not want to wake me up as I slept on one of the last benches.

What the fresco painter had done with his brush the Luftwaffe achieved with more modern means. They opened the roofs so that clouds alone floated between the sleeper and the sky. Martyrs arose in increasing numbers to Heaven, smoke ascended to meet the clouds....

On a lucky day I exchanged those heavens for mighty beams above my cot. The trees the beams came from had been felled at the time of Michelangelo, when a bishop had a palace built for himself in the oldest quarter of the Eternal City. Even palaces may come down in the world. Their masters move on, servants and their kin occupy the halls; they build partitions, destroy walls and staircases, break holes for the stovepipes, and the proud palaces without plumbing (the fountains in the street give the purest water day and night) become dignified slums, respectable ruins.... Age-old dust, the soot of charcoal fires that have cooked vegetable

soup for three hundred years, is not dirt but patina. My palace had come a long way downward when we met. By night the age-old beams cracked and sighed.

“God Almighty, keep a ceiling between us two,” was my pious evening prayer. But in a world where one half of mankind prays for death and plague for the other half, no God may grant Himself the luxury of listening to prayers.

Once again I lost my boards and beams. A certain event had occurred for another time (it is nowhere more difficult than in Rome to do something new). The Barbarians were in town again, like the Goths of Alaric, the Vandals after their campaign in Africa (their Desert Fox was called Geiserich), and the German mercenaries of the Sacco di Roma. SS chieftain Eugen Dollmann was somewhat less picturesque than Dürer’s *lansquenets* as he strolled every morning with his wolfhound to the torture chamber in the Via Tasso. A smiling young man, he avoided the uniform in the “Open City” and prepared the shooting of hostages and his own postwar alibi with equal care. (Logic helps us only through the past. The chaotic structure of the world does not permit forecasting. How could Tasso, writing his epic about the Crusades, foresee that one day he would be named together with a German, a certain Goethe, who wrote a drama about him, and with another German, Dollmann, a century and half later? And how could Dollmann, who was so clever in trading Allied prisoners of high standing against impunity, foresee that he would find himself and his dog in a book about Southern Brazil?)

I did not want to meet the brave SS men in the former office of the cultural attaché, nor did the major of the Green Howards, Darry Mander, who waited with me for the Eighth Army to arrive. Our ceiling was the sky during the December nights when we sat on a roof until the German patrols should have finished their search downstairs.

My pine boards! During all those years they were growing and stretching themselves; they looked out over the most peaceful, rolling hills, rustled in the wind, shone in dew and sunshine, and were untouched by what we call history. They do not sigh and crack like beams that bear the weight of four hundred years’ happenings in Europe!

To have my own boards between myself and the Milky Way gives me a cozy feeling of security after twenty years of wandering.

I have a sitting room with a place for a piano in it and I could point to it, saying carelessly, “My instrument is in the church, for the time being.” I also have room for a library and a very few books - only those which voluntarily followed me across ocean and forests, but I may call them “my library” or even (pointing at the two dozen Latin authors) “my classical library.” The bar is represented by a single bottle of wine from Mount Carmel, a gift of the patient in São Paulo. It is waiting for events still resting on the knees of the gods. Meanwhile I might get wineglasses from somewhere. On one of the walls I have a few ocelot pelts, Botocudo arrows, and stone axes. Displaying them, I could begin the story of my adventures like a true lord of the mansion in a real novel: “When, after indescribable dangers and adventures, I finally reached the savages...” I would again be telling the plain truth, as the Indian reservation is not more than three to four hours away on horseback, and I have reached the realms of the noble, naked savages after dangerous travels through the lands of ignoble savages in uniform.

XVI

From my sitting room I can step onto the terrace, just big enough for two armchairs, already foreseen in the next five-year plan. From here, lying across the road to the Botocudo kingdom, behind the hills and pastures to the right, is New Jericho, the key to the "Russian Valley."

I have no radio to establish a one-sided communication with the outside world. If I want to get some sort of information about the happenings the milk-cart drivers do not hear about, I have to consult my books. The valley gives light and silence; the printed characters overcome the distances.

The magic carpet of letters carries me back to the city I love. I visit Rome with Horace and Trilussa, with Peyrefitte and Pliny; and retracing the road which, starting from Donna Irma, leaves the century of motors, newspapers, and television and leads back to former times, I love to follow Petronius and Apuleius into the distances which lend enchantment to the view.

I treat the people of the valley; I listen to them and I have noted a few of their opinions. But words we both use have different meanings, and the word "doctor" implies a distance too wide to overcome. The only one to whom I have become really close is Horace. I know his favorite landscape in Sabina, Mount Soracte and the olive groves, and I am sure that if he flew down from Olympus and saw my own olive trees, the "ferns, the enemies of the curved plow," and the colonist who, "*ut prisca gens mortalium paterna rura bobus exercet suis*," he would feel at home in my garden and would find inspiration for new poems.

Living in the New World offers tangible analogies to the relations between Romans and Greeks. American pilgrims travel to London, Paris, and Rome as the Romans sailed "*ad doctas Athenas*." European professors are very much like their Greek counterparts under the Capitol. Horace tries his best to be proud of being a citizen of Rome, but is always a little bit ashamed of not having been born in Attica. He even tried to write Greek verse and read the Greek poets, turning their scrolls "with daily and nightly hand." He considers it his greatest merit to have brought the Greek forms of poetry to Rome. His ideas lack originality. But in spite of that he is great: a giant of the art of poetic chatter, a timeless master of style. Emperor Augustus knew that he wanted him for a secretary - and Horace knew that he must decline. He saved his perfect instrument of expression for his own thoughts.

Horace - the tradition says - was small and stout. Now Kretschmer tells us that lyrical talents belong to poets of Don Quixote's build, and that the Sancho Panzas of literary history are the broad, epic poets. Horace came too late for epics. Not only Homer but even Ennius was given the title "father" in his time. A belated epic poet has no alternative but to mix together anecdotes and philosophy, small talk and chatter. In this type of literature he remains unsurpassed. Nobody knows as well as he how to combine mythological figures and hillbillies, politicians and barbers, into such a perfect society, to weave a texture of their words and his own, to find the perfect formula for philosophic thought and aphorisms which contain the final essence of a wise man's teaching. Great is Horace in the wide scope of his world. He feels at home in Maecenas' literary circle and among the peasants and serfs of Sabina who wouldn't take the trouble to go to town and see the Forum. He knows the villages in Apulia and the Academy in Athens. He talks with slaves and the snobs of the Capitol - and as soon as he quotes the words of his contemporaries they become literature. And if he claims that his work will be read on the banks of the Rhone and among the Gelonians in Scythia he has not

said too much: *ut figura docet*, he lives, laughs, and teaches above the road from Donna Irma to New Jericho.

Trilussa writes for a few. His language is also that of Rome, but only of the town itself on the Seven Hills, of the town which is erroneously considered the capital of Italy today. It might be true from the administrative point of view, but as far as literature and language are concerned, the Italians - from Lombardy, Sicily, Tuscany - have only conquered and (under the pretext of remodernization) destroyed the city. The dialect of Rome is a language spoken perfectly by only a few. Broadcasting, TV, and newspapers are busily destroying it. In the dying language of our Rome, Trilussa wrote his thousand fables, and I love to read them. Poets who have never written a line in prose are rare nowadays. He sat between his stuffed monkeys and dried crocodiles in his studio and waited, even at the age of eighty, for the inspiring Muse. I wish he were here to make all the strange animals of my forest talk.

Peyrefitte was only a guest in Rome, as I was. He played an enviable *rôle* - the one of *le spectateur pur*. He came, saw and wrote. The truth and nothing but the truth sounds unlikely in literature (the perfect invention is the literary truth) and therefore he is not a great man in the art of letters. But he also made a *monumentum aere perennius*, a monument of enduring bronze, a monument of the twilight atmosphere, of the dusk of the Occidental world. According to the Irish prophet St. Malachy, Pope Pius XII (*pastor angelicus*, the diplomat as a Pope, from *angelus*, the ambassador) would be the first of the final half-dozen Popes, but as Trilussa's language fades slowly away in the straight little streets between the Piazza Navona and the Tiber, the last candles shed their last light under the cupola of St. Peter's.

Pliny the younger writes letters about events in Rome. Even if they have taken more than the usual time to reach me, I read them with interest, especially since the Brazilian postal service has taught me patience. If I were obliged to write about my valley in good Latin, I could simply copy his description of his Tuscany estate:

"Aestatis mira elementia ... the summer is wonderfully mild ... semper aer spirito aliquo movetur, frequentius tamen auras quam ventos habet ... there is always a movement in the air, more like a light breeze than a wind ... regionis forma pulcherrima ... a lovely region ... diffusa planities montibus cingitur ... the wide plain is surrounded by mountains ... montes summa suc parte procera nemora et antiqua habent ... old, wild groves are on the mountain summits ... inde caeduae silvae cum ipso monte descendunt ... the forests follow the slopes of the hills ... hic senes multi ... there are many old people here ... audias fabulas veteres sermonesque maiorum ... you will hear old fables, old sayings ... cumque veneris illo putes alio te saeculum natum ... if you get here you are going to feel as if you had been born in another century."

Hungarian literature is represented by only one poet: Ady. He accompanies many a Hungarian in exile. He is, like the language itself, a common secret of those born on a linguistic island. It is impossible to translate a single line of his poems. In small doses he acts as an antidote against those symptoms of abstinence you note in visiting Hungarians who for some time have had no chance to speak their mother tongue, and which seem to me similar to the symptoms dope addicts describe if deprived of their drug. I admit, of course, that exiles from other small nations suffer from similar neuroses. I read about Casals, who needs daily amounts of Catalan and is unable to substitute Spanish for it.

I have lost the few German books I had, or have lent them to friends who preferred to keep them. I do possess something of Goethe: his handclasp. I could not lose this on the long trip through misery and back to the threshold of a safe existence. I am willing to lend this handclasp to young poets or those who wish to become poets. I could not sell it to collectors of Goethiana.

It is no particular credit to me to have received this handclasp, and I know it is not a unique collectors' item. Goethe shook many hands, his visitors transmitted his handshakes ... further research could furnish several of the same type. Meanwhile I enjoy mine, which has passed through only three hands - and two out of these three have handled Goethe's instrument with considerable success.

The said handshake was accepted by Heinrich Heine, who came to Weimar expressly for this purpose in a yellow mail coach. It was on a sunny afternoon that the two poets sat at the same table.

"They sat" is too short a description. Sparks fly between contrary poles and both the young and the old poet were fighting spirits. They could not exchange compliments for very long.

"What are you working on right now?" asked Goethe.

Heine was one of those who prefer to lose a friend rather than not venture a dig.

"I want to write a drama about Doctor Faustus."

The old gentleman could parry a thrust.

"And have you got other business to handle here in Weimar?"

It is not reported whether they smiled, but we know that Goethe stretched out his right hand, which had written "*Das Heideröschen*," and shook the hand of Heine, which contained "*Die Lorelei*."

Tens of years later that hand lay half paralyzed on the edge of a bed in Paris. A young Bavarian schoolteacher looked at it and spoke the sentence he had prepared during his long pilgrimage to the dying poet in exile:

"I admire your poems."

Heine was tired. He was not in a speaking mood. But he shook, with his remaining strength, his guest's hand.

The teacher kept the handshake with utmost care, even if he never arranged the letters of the alphabet into poems. He wrote them one by one upon the blackboard, and after writing them for a long series of years he was pensioned and had time to walk around in the English Garden in Munich.

There he met Hans Carossa, student of medicine with literary ambitions, who was studying anatomy and the elements of poetry at the same time. Carossa listened with religious attention to what the teacher related about his journey to Paris and his visit to Heine.

Carossa has himself reported on this meeting, in his book *Jahr der Schönen Täuschungen*. The remarkable fact is that the book was published in Germany in 1940. To name Heine, to write about somebody who visited him respectfully, was an act of exceptional courage. The Gestapo was mighty and Buchenwald was very near to Weimar. Carossa, the keeper of the handshake, ran a terrible risk.

A year later I strolled with Carossa across the Piazza di Spagna in Rome and we mounted the famous stairs to Trinità dei Monti. The Eternal City was not impressed by the ephemeral successes of the Third Reich. Here the stones remembered well how it had gone when Hannibal stood before the gates and drew off again. Rome looked peaceful in '41.

"I wish I could stay," said Carossa. "Life is hard at home. You have no idea how much a German poet has to reject these days. If only one could reject everything!"

I merely nodded.

“You don’t know how lucky you are to be here,” he continued. “A few lyric poems are all one has left from a lifetime.”

And at the top of the Spanish Stairs, by the Obelisk, he gave me the handshake I treasure in my wooden house, glad to hand it out and keep it at the same time. It is good to have something of Goethe and to feel how short a century and a half really is.

XVII

My Latin library is the only one increasing. It seems that the books of Petronius, Apuleius, and Ausonius have discovered my valley and flock together on my desk, under it, and around my bed. They have a long past and certainly a great deal of experience. Perhaps they remember that their own world was struck by a catastrophe, which appeared to be the final one. And while the books in the centers of culture disappeared, those which had fled in due time to the back country escaped destruction. Valleys in the Pyrenees preserved a few. Others fled from the borders of Scotland to Ireland and survived the darkest ages. Now the outskirts of civilization are in even remoter areas; perhaps Donna Irma is one of them.

Apart from the aims of the books themselves, I must admit that I called upon them to help me in a particular enterprise. I hesitate to speak about it. My friends, to whom I have confessed having this hobby, prefer to call it my obsession. They regard me as though I had told them I was going to build an exact replica of the Cathedral of Milan with matches and make a living by exhibiting it. It has been suggested that I take up fishing or stamp collecting instead.

I feel I had better explain how it came about that inside of the wall of boards I built another one of grammars and dictionaries and retreated, rather than only one century like the other inhabitants of the valley, almost twenty.

It was difficult to live through the war in an Axis country. "Anyone who does not lose his reason in the face of certain events has none to lose," says Lessing. Taking the wise ostrich as an example, I tried my method: not to touch printed material issued after the French Revolution. In the particular fields of medicine, this decision forced me to read the old Latin books of the wise physicians of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The untapped treasure of bedside talk of yore, their anecdotes, superstitions, and hypermodern clinical wisdom enchanted me. After a while I felt at home in their mother tongue: humanists' Latin.

It is a strange language, known by few. It is not pure Ciceronian - those doctors cut into the feeling flesh and did not pass their nights studying classical poets. It was even less the Church's Latin - the Latin of the priests, who used to say, "Three doctors, at least two atheists." It was the language of awakening Occidental science. Copernicus, publishing his treatise on the revolutions of the celestial orbs, used it as perfectly as Vesalius, who published, in the same year, his book about the fabric of the human body. It is a language which may appear to a classicist as combined - to quote one of them - from "Chaucerian, Shakespearian and Tobacco-Road usage." It contains words which make professors of philology shudder, like *hallux* for the big toe ... but it is the language Gilbert used in the first scientific treatise on magnetism, Harvey on circulation, Newborn on the calculus, Morgagni on pathological anatomy. It has influenced the language and the thinking of scientists down to our own day (doctors still obstinately use *hallux*) and even the first paper on non-Euclidian geometry appeared in it. Scientists know little Latin today; classicists know less about science. The language that humanists made into an unparalleled means of understanding is appreciated by very few. In a Europe torn by internal strife, witnessing a new and perfected barbarism, I found consolation in Erasmic Latin and came to love it.

Reading these old Latin books does not really lead us back into antiquity. The language of the learned in ancient Rome was Greek. It leads us into our own, private past, into good old Europe, into the happy centuries of Voltaire and Bach, when every learned person wrote and told stories and jokes in Latin, the language which today appears to many only an expression of sets of complicated rules.

I felt bad enough among my contemporaries. I tried to enter another society of men: the timeless society of humanists. They accepted me with good grace. I could chat with them in a common mother tongue: Latin, mixed up from phrases of Cicero and Plautus, Terence and Martial, unheard of in the *Forum Romanum*, but alive every time you open a scientific book printed before the French Revolution.

I felt I was accepted into this society as a reader, a passive member, and sometimes, in ambitious moments, I hoped I could become a full member: one who had written a Latin book himself!

The relatively peaceful times in Rome finished abruptly in September, 1943. Overnight a situation developed which not even prophets of the rank of Nostradamus could have foreseen. Rome was defended by the arch-enemy, the Germans, and attacked by her friends, the Anglo-Americans. General Kesselring sat in the belly of Horace's beloved Mount Soracte, listened to his private Don Cossack choir, and phoned into town when he wanted hostages shot. Arabs in French uniforms, Afrikaans-speaking Bushmen, Texans and English-speaking Japanese fought their way from Cassino up. Germans with emblems showing a jumping tiger and the inscription "Free India," Fascists in newly invented uniforms roamed the town. My only protective paper - resistance fighters seek the protection of paper walls - was a document issued by the Royal Hungarian Legation, which represented no king at a court that had no monarch either. It was not much more fake than the credentials of the missing minister.

Meanwhile, I had to live on something, and as times were far too dramatic for people to be sick, I taught English. "They will come in a fortnight," was the watchword of all who waited, and learning English seemed to hasten liberation. Rich people even offered a piece of bread and cheese for a lesson!

On a particularly hungry autumn day I got a new pupil. He spoke the melodious accent of Venice and said, "I know no English at all. We had it in school and you know what schools teach. I hate grammar. I do not want to memorize words. But I have to talk to Allied authorities, once they are in Rome."

"When do you think they will come?" I asked.

"In a month or so."

"Yes, sir," I said, surprised to find a pessimist. Actually the Allies did not get to Rome until more than eight months later.

"We start tomorrow at eight."

"Yes, sir."

"And you choose me a book."

"Yes, sir."

I chose. My choice was greatly facilitated by the fact that I had only one - namely, Alan Alexander Milne's *Winnie-the-Pooh*. I loved that book so much that I had even forgotten who had lent it to me. I dived into it to see if I could use it.

Soon I was relieved to see that I could. The book contains remarks about the present and expected weather, a subject which I felt would be a perfect introduction to conversation with British staff officers, though I was not quite sure about the American attitude in this matter. The book contained information about the transmission of messages by air, by means of bottles, or by whistling in a particular way. It contained a plan, pure General Staff style, for capturing someone or something by means of deception. Finally there was a banquet with an appropriate speech one might deliver if honored in a particular way.

“Here is the book I have chosen from among many,” I lied next morning at eight o’clock sharp.

We started with the chapter on the Heffalump, as I held the conversation between Pooh and Piglet as essential, in case my friend made contact with senior officers: “Piglet said, ‘If you see what I mean, Pooh,’ and Pooh said, ‘It’s just what I think myself, Piglet,’ and Piglet said, ‘But, on the other hand, Pooh, we must remember,’ and Pooh said, ‘Quite true, Piglet, although I had forgotten it for the moment.’” We made speedy progress. When we reached the Cunning Trap, I already knew that my pupil had been sent by the underground of Venice in order to obtain arms from the Allies. The day Piglet took his bath Monty left the command of the Eighth Army. The Allies seemed stuck at Cassino very much like Pooh in Rabbit’s door. My pupil’s English improved rapidly, although it was I who was getting slenderer and slenderer. Eeyore’s balloon exploded and the island of Leros fell to the Germans. Roo took a swim and Leipzig went up in flames. When finally Pooh received his pencil-case my friend said, “No more lessons.”

“The irregular verbs...,” I objected.

“I have to leave. Besides, I think my English is good enough by now.”

I did not meet Pietro Ferraro again until after the war, after the ending which was a happy one for all of us who had not already been shot. He had received the arms, and had been parachuted back into Venice, where he had led the insurrection and prevented the Germans from carrying out their sabotage plan. He had been awarded the highest Italian decoration, the Medal of Gold.

“I had no difficulty in treating with the British,” he said. “On the contrary. They complimented me on my English.”

So Winnie-the-Pooh had helped Winnie Churchill to win the war. He was not mighty enough to win the peace. It was one of the most depressing postwar phenomena that peace wouldn’t come.

Italy became more and more crowded. Half a million persons arrived regularly every year, without passports, without knowing the language, waiting for food and jobs, and nothing could be done about it, because the government was against birth control. I did not feel tempted by the idea of crossing the Iron Curtain in the wrong direction. Therefore I applied to the IRO, the International Refugee Organization, to bring me into a peaceful country across the water.

Even big organizations disappear without a trace, as if ferns had overgrown their tombs. Nobody will ever dig through the tons of their records to write their histories. Expressionless figures do not tell the story. The DPs - Displaced Persons - have disappeared even more untraceably. They have become just plain people again. They have tried to forget and most of them have managed to.

Many will not praise the IRO. Neither the overpaid Allied executives nor the terribly underpaid displaced employees were in a particular hurry to get things done. Saturdays and Sundays, and on all Italian, American, British, Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish holidays, the whole organization slept. Much of the rest of the time was consumed in waiting - waiting for commissions to come, for regulations to be issued, for people to pass from black lists to gray ones, from the grays to whites, for the world to forget what the Nazis had done or to realize what the Communists wanted to do. The Displaced Person meanwhile passed his time sitting in a stinking camp, listening to loudspeakers shouting in twenty languages, living under conditions that human society ordinarily reserves for burglars or worse, so that they shall

think and repent. The condition of the inmates - I mean those cared for - was worsened by their deep conviction that food and clothing destined for them were stolen, that corruption was widespread, and that the records were part of the functionaries' conspiracy to conceal the facts from posterity.

I have no proofs of corruption I could convince a jury with, but it is my private opinion that if, instead of having an organization, the United Nations had furnished every Displaced Person with a first-class ticket on a luxury liner to whatever place he chose to go to, they would have saved a great lot of money.

Yet I would say the IRO worked wonders. They shipped about a million persons into countries which did not want them.

New citizens are admitted everywhere via baby boom. All other ways are highly selective. The IRO was greatly embarrassed by the lists of persons wanted by the receiving countries.

The Displaced Persons were displaced because they were unwanted where they came from. The bulk of them were "intellectuals" - small businessmen, doctors, lawyers, judges, teachers, ex-officers, civil servants. No overseas country had asked for such. Canada wanted specialists in the cultivation of sugar beets. South Africa wanted personnel for a lobster-packing plant, possibly of Anglo-Saxon extraction; the IRO was expected to find them among the refugees from Central and Eastern Europe. Australia asked for people to pass two years "at the Australian government's pleasure," eventually helping the Australian contingent in South Korea to clear mine fields.

The exclusion lists were longer. The Australians were absolutely noninclined to admit single women past forty (and quickly sent back one who had passed her fortieth birthday on board the ship, which had been held up for two days because of smallpox cases). The United States excluded all who were suspected of present or past tuberculosis, as if antibiotics had never been invented. Brazil excluded doctors, barbers, streetcar motormen, syphilitics, and non-Aryans - a somewhat strange list, especially if we consider the high number of syphilitics already present and active, and the fact that the times of official Axis sympathies were supposed to be over, and that non-Aryans of various colors form the majority in most Brazilian states.

That's where the IRO came in brilliantly. This oversized, inefficient machinery solved the difficulties in a genial way.

The war had been the heyday of illegality. The daily production of laws and rules had created the most perfect chaos in history. Words like "law," "document," "certificate," had lost their sense. What law should enjoy validity if those of humanity are trampled on every day? What was the sense of a certificate, when people were shot because the birth certificate of their grandmother was found wanting? The policy of the IRO very rightly held that sick papers had to be cured.

The most efficient office was the one which provided people with appropriate names, grandfathers to please the Minister of Foreign Affairs in Brazil, birthdays to satisfy the Minister of Labor in Canberra. Judges of the Supreme Court of a Central European republic were supplied with certificates that they were experienced lobster-packers. Chest films were rechristened; positive Wassermann tests changed owners. People departed to faraway shores and became human beings again.

The very few who were still leaving Hungary had to furnish two documents to the authorities there, showing that they were trustworthy Communists and hopelessly ill. The IRO furnished them with two equally important papers proving that they were safe anti-Communists and perfectly healthy.

There were only a few hopeless cases - high and well-known Nazi functionaries with SS marks tattooed under their armpits; the IRO could not handle them and sent them over to the Pontifical Commission for Refugees. Their problems were solved there. Who could deny the Vatican the right to rechristen people, to open the way of repentance to black sheep or shirts? Argentina took them willingly.

As I mentioned, I chose Brazil because it looked verdant and spacious on the map. Eventually, the IRO dumped me with several hundred similar agronomists, food chemists, and coffee-planting experts from the old Hapsburg monarchy into a sort of shabby coal freighter and we were marooned on the so-called Isle of Flowers in the Bay of Rio.

The island is certainly not an attractive sample of the free world. It got some publicity later on, when the Hungarian freedom fighters arrived. They staged a revolt against the stench, hunger, lack of water and sanitary facilities, and a few succeeded in fleeing to England. Others wanted to return to Hungary. They were called "Communist agitators."

After a week I seemed no closer to leaving the island than when I landed there. It was Carnival time, and the police had other things to do besides taking fingerprints in hell.

In life and novels there are situations where actors or readers know no way out. Then the page turns and something happens. I have mentioned my employment at a lead mine. This came about when on my tenth day on the Isle of Flowers a gentleman came ashore there and announced that he was looking for personnel for such a mine. He wanted, among others, a male nurse.

"Is the mine surrounded by water?" was all I asked.

"No, it is in the forest."

That was reason enough to sign up.

I wouldn't recommend the mine to doctors. For the pay of a nurse, one has to deploy the abilities of a universal specialist. There is everything to be treated: daily knifings, explosions, gas poisoning, dysentery, leprosy, a wide spectrum of tropical diseases, while the rest you may find in the index of handbooks of pathology. Besides these diseases, the workers suffer from lead poisoning. Their children's worms and hereditary syphilis have to be treated as well, and an occasional childbirth enlivens the picture. I would rather suggest the mine to a film scenarist in quest of unusual surroundings. The combination of the dangers and primitiveness of the forest with industrial dirt and dangers is unique. At least I doubt if there are other lead mines in which miners are bitten by rattlesnakes.

As to the miners, they were also a chosen lot. Landless *caboclos*, fugitives from the drought in northeastern Brazil and the police in São Paulo, and a few greenhorns from the Isle of Flowers were those condemned to lead poisoning for a wage whose equivalent in U.S. money would have been less than ten cents an hour.

One of the few who couldn't complain was my humble self.

Half of the mine belonged to a French company and there were three French engineers. Two of them had daughters, and the daughters needed somebody to teach them Latin, English, mathematics, and history. Besides being a doctor with the salary of an orderly, I became a well-paid professor of philology and science. I hadn't wasted my time reading French novels for a lifetime and Latin medical books for fifteen years....

My former teaching experience having been limited to expounding and commenting on the deeds, poems, and adventures of Edward Bear, better known as Winnie-the-Pooh, I started with Milne's book, still the only volume representing English literature in my scanty library.

The young ladies, having passed their early life in a lead mine in Argentina, had not known the book and were curious and enthusiastic.

They were far less curious, let alone enthusiastic, about Latin grammar. They found that five declensions were far too much and cases like the ablative entirely useless. Eeyore, who had lost his tail, touched them more deeply than their compatriot Vercingetorix, who had lost a battle and his life.

“Is there no Latin book like *Winnie-the-Pooh*?” asked Anne, the prettiest of them all.

I could have told them about Petronius and Apuleius, but I realized that their lovely fables were not the ones I was expected to recommend to *jeunes filles en fleur*.

“I’ll try to find one,” I promised vaguely.

That night I sat down and tried to translate the story of the Heffalump, which we were just then reading, into the old, old doctors’ Latin.

I do not dare to say that my translation was brilliant, but it worked. The mademoiselles were ready to follow the events around the Cunning Trap even in spite of ablatives and gerunds. Even the Chief Engineer, a splendid humanist himself, and thanks to his education in Greek lead mines a far better Grecist than myself, liked both the Bear, which had helped him to live when a prisoner of the Boches, and the translation. When he left for Paris he sent me Quicherat’s great and massive French-Latin dictionary.

Now I felt under obligation to continue. The short spells between knifings and accidents belonged to classical philology.

This idyllic life came to a sudden end when the manager who had hired me on the island fired me, apparently on a quick decision. I cannot reproach him. I had obstinately suggested to the lead-poisoned miners that they get the hell out of the place, although he had repeatedly warned me that the mine was not a welfare institution and that it was a hard job to find new personnel. Sadly I said “*Au revoir*” and left for São Paulo, the immigrants’ hope city.

Here I soon discovered that it was I who could not get out of the “Cunning Trap.” The Latin Pooh - or *Pu* - had started as a necessity, had become a hobby, and was by now an obsession. I had asked myself a question that only years could answer: Is it possible to find all the phrases in the story of Pooh and his friends in the extant Latin literature?

Knowing the book by heart, I started to read my way first through Horace, later Livy ... and obstinately, like a dope addict, through more and more. The text slowly became a mosaic of fragments, ever more similar to those texts Gutenberg’s invention had poured all over Europe, or at least the Republic of Humanists.

Here I am now with the manuscript of the Latin bear, the manuscript I always consider finished until a new old author lands on my desk. I send the text to faraway friends and I keep receiving touching, discouraging letters. “Children read no Latin, grown-ups do not read children’s books,” a wise publisher wrote. “Maybe you have too much spare time, but we have not,” was the reaction of another.

My generous friend, the Chief Engineer, seems to be the only one who likes the idea....

I tried to write a letter to a few publishers. I considered it a masterpiece of argumentation. “The parents of good students will buy the book for their children as a gift. The parents of bad students will buy it so that their children will develop a liking for Latin. People who have studied Latin will buy it so that they will finally have a use for their Latin. People who did not study Latin will buy it to find out what Latin is like.” I got only one simple, very short reply: “I am not crazy.”

On long Sunday afternoons I browse through my Latin authors, correcting the text here and there, replacing a line with one I think more suitable, hoping that there will be, among the countless publishers the world over, a crazy one.

XVIII

I love my wooden castle and could think of no place better suited for one who is homesick and longs to be both in Italy and in Central Europe. One who wishes to create Tuscany around himself may plant olives and cypresses, bay and vines, and embellish the hillcrests with trees as translucent as those with which Perugino adorned his Holy Land. The lover of the Campagna may plant oranges and artichokes. He who loves Northern Europe may surround his house with mighty oak trees, like Braun, who once happened to get a handful of acorns. Isn't the shaper of the landscape the mightiest of all men? I would like to plant horse chestnuts around my house. I have the ambition to plant beeches down below by the brook, to boast an alley of plane trees leading from the road to the house, and real chestnuts behind it, on the way to the *serra*. I feel actual envy when I hear that someone has nut trees and that there are currant plants in Argentina. My greatest pride are the wild strawberries which already form almost a complete lawn in front of my house. I read in the encyclopedia that these are South American plants. That is probably the reason why they thrive as well as dahlia and gladiolus. The ancestors of my own strawberries were brought by a rich gentleman from Machu-Picchu in Peru to São Paulo, and I flew them from there into the valley.

In the Protestant Cemetery in Rome (where Keats and a son of Goethe sleep) wild strawberries grow on all the graves. I would prefer, just as they do, strawberries to ferns for my grave.

I see that I have given myself away; I said before that one can judge the character of a man by the trees that stand around his house. Certainly I have a few olives, a nut tree ... but my castle is still surrounded mainly by dream trees.

I am master of the land from the road to the *serra*. Mine is this four-hectare kingdom, bearing *aipi* and sweet potatoes, just as the neighboring kingdoms do, but destined to be a forest of rare trees, strange bushes, and exotic flowers. As the first rare and exotic flower, I have succeeded in growing a fine daffodil from Austria. "I have never seen this kind of orchid before," one of my flower-loving patients told me. For some time I used to write letters to my overseas friends asking them for seeds of trees and wild flowers until I discovered that none of them had gardens and that they never went to the meadows right after flowering-time. None of them overlooks, like a begging king, a kingdom of ferns and weeds.

When I reach the end of my kingdom - I almost said the end of the world - there where the *serra* is so densely covered by shrubs, palms, and nameless trees that it appears like a dark green pyramid, and look over to the blue horizon, I feel like an aggressor and conqueror: there, far away, is the home of the last Botocudos.

A hundred years ago Santa Catarina was their own property, their own world. Fifty years ago - when the Kaiser still rode with the golden helmet - the valley of Donna Irma was their happy hunting ground, a safe fortress against the hateful conquerors at the seacoast, a place where according to human reason no disasters could ever happen. The last two or three hundred *Indios*, with the last stone axes, the last stone arrowheads, and the last man who chips them from the big stone, live there in the blue hills today. The Stone Age is going to end in the Atomic Age, unless the gloomy prophecies come true and both end at the same time....

I am writing and planting in the optimistic hope that although the kings of yesterday are doomed, we are going to live forever.

I know very little about my predecessors but that little I would like to preserve for a little while by setting it down here.



They believed that the tribe lived forever, as well as in the individual's life after death. To the savage forest-dweller this seems self-evident. As long as they wandered through the woods everything remained unchanged. Their days had no name, their years no number. The forest was eternally green. The seasons were "indicated by color signals. Yellow trees flamed up sometimes, violet ones later, then fire-red patches emblazoned the branches...." For centuries the same animals appeared in the bush. The *anta* nourished a family for a week, a *paca* for three days, the *tutu*, the ant-eater, for a meal. Snakes are immortal; they change their skin and become young again. Children are ever being born. Some become boys and warriors, others girls and mothers. It is bad to be hungry. It is good to stretch into the warm ashes after a full meal. Trees, words, people - everything is eternal under the sky. Two thousand equal years ... who should doubt that life was eternal? For two thousand years the Botocudos roamed these forests. Sometimes a family, a tribe, lived for a hundred years in the same cave.

It was an Austrian who discovered a few facts about those times, for the Botocudos themselves kept no records. Why write, if everything is eternal? (And why, if everything passes anyhow?) Edward Hörhan, who has lived forty years with them, first to fight them, later on to civilize them, finally to take the death-mask of their language, has found out that they were - Ainus. They started out from northern Japan at the time of Christ or probably earlier; they strolled calmly through Alaska, Canada, Panama, and Peru down into this part of Brazil.... From Peru they brought obsidian axes, one of which was found not far away from here.... They roamed around in this country of pine forests and wild manioc for a thousand years - the thousand years that ended fifty years ago. The naked savages knew about fire and had six thousand words. They told tales. They had no relatives among the other Indians. They spoke an entirely different language. When they met others they took stone axes and fought. The enemy swiftly reached the eternal hunting grounds and the family had a square meal. They didn't even need to skin the prey. Noble enemies received the honor of being served with roasted manioc roots. Hörhan still found a few old Botocudos who spoke Guarani fluently. He marveled at such philological zeal and found the solution: the Botocudos had led a war against the Guarani tribe, had won, and held a banquet. The Guarani warriors and the old women furnished a gourmet meal. But the Botocudos were neither so silly nor so savage as to put young girls and women on the menu. The consequences had both a father and a mother tongue. The actions of the Botocudos need not surprise us. I have met in Rome and

São Paulo a few ladies with small blue numbers tattooed on their forearms: “the Auschwitz number.” The survivors of the death camp were mostly girls - a fact which shows how easily the differences between the Stone and Atomic Ages can be overestimated.

The heroic times for the Botocudos ended around 1910. The government marked off an area of virgin forest forty kilometers square as their last reservation. About three thousand forest-dwellers were herded together there. There they were met by enemies that could not be defeated with stone axes and arrows: tuberculosis, whooping cough, measles, diphtheria, *cachaça*, tobacco - and finally polio and fanatical missionaries. “They lost,” as Hörhan puts it, “their Apollo-like bodies,” until they could wear the cast-off clothing of the whites. They lost their teeth, they began to forget their own vocabulary, without learning Portuguese in the schools that were built for them. Twenty years later there were perhaps a thousand left. Today there are two or three hundred. Big lumber companies want their land. The newly planned dam on the Itajai River will submerge their whole territory. It would be a pity to waste the trees. The last giants of the forest will fall together with the last Botocudos. They will not even enter literature, like their faraway brethren, the last Mohicans. Their Mongolian smile is vanishing, their forest is turning into boards and pulp, the cemetery of human languages is enriched by one more grave.

It would be unfair to put too much emphasis on the fact that the bellicose and gastronomic enterprises of the *Indios* were closely connected, while in civilized surroundings war is accompanied by hunger and not sumptuous meals. They could do something we cannot: they could live in the forest. The European in Brazil shudders when he loses the pavement from under his feet. How long could a family resist if put naked into the forest? Who could cut an arrow, make fire, build a roof? Who could cut threads out of tree bark and find eggs in a bird’s nest?

Old colonists still report about the peaceful activities and arts of the Botocudos. “When you saw a square hole high up in a tree, you knew it wasn’t one of us who had cut it. An *Indio* had taken honey from the wild bees. That was what they liked most. How did they get so high? They kept their secrets.”

“You met them sometimes in the forest. They knew everything. There are trees with red and black berries. When the berries fell they came and made necklaces for their girls.” A neighbor of mine has a small bamboo flute. “I got it from a Botocudo,” he says, and blows it, opening and closing its only hole. “You hear? It sounds like the *tucana*. They had flutes and whistles for all birds. You couldn’t tell the difference. You ran after a bird, hunted for hours, and finally you found a flute-blowing savage with green, yellow, red, and blue feathers in his hair.” I am sorry I came so late and did not meet Papageno with his magic flute.

The scientists may ask the objects questions. The arrowheads will tell where the rocks are they came from. The way of tuning flutes may confirm or destroy the Japan hypothesis. What the objects do not confess is bound to remain a secret forever.

XIX

Looking to the left, I can follow the road I came on to my house for a long stretch. I walk that stretch unwillingly. My house is my terminus. Everything around the house is familiar; beyond it things become stranger, step by step.

From my window I still see well-known rooftops. Under one I found a remarkable collection of animal skulls, rocks, and birds' eggs. (There are birds which have blue eggs, but the real bluebirds have white ones.) Under another roof, not far from the house of my patient who had not yet eaten dry bread, lived an old woman who suffered from asthma. Dying from it saved her from starvation. Her daughter-in-law skimmed milk with the machine in the room next to hers and carried the cream away. Her angelic-looking grandchild said, "Grandmother should die. She doesn't work, stays in bed, and wants to eat!" But then I see houses about which I keep my illusions, because they are covered by eglantine and because I have not entered them as a forerunner of death.

New Jericho is not far away, but a traveler could easily overlook the place.

"Things like this only happen in New Jericho...." Many a story starts this way or finishes with this phrase.

"The affair of the school festival ... things like this only happen in New Jericho," my friend Grapsch tells me, and he ought to know, as he passes most of his spare time there. (Some say he has a girl friend there; others say he has two.) "It's a pity there won't be any more school festivals. The school building has finally been put in use. But the festivals were really great!"

"Everyone admits that the old *rancho* is no school building. You simply can't get seventy children into it. The teacher is simply unable to teach there, even if he knew all the letters himself! He gives excellent marks to all the children, and everybody likes him. Therefore the president of the school association, Jochen Bimmelmann, called the parents' assembly together and said, 'We cannot go on this way - we must build a new school!'

"Now, the political situation is like this: the county has a mayor who is of the People's Party and the state has a governor who is of the Freedom Party. Consequently members of the People's Party said, 'Sure, the state must build it! The jerks, they stash away enough of our tax-stamp money.' The Freedom Party said, 'No, not at all. This is a municipal school and the county must fork over the money for it, whether they want to or not.' 'Fine,' said President Bimmelmann, 'we'll organize a school festival and buy a piece of land with the money that comes in. If the land is once bought, then a school will arise on it, whether it's built by the state or the municipality.' So the school festival was organized.

"It was a beauty. There were only a hundred and fifty people there, but a hundred and eighty steaks were sold, twenty roasted ducks, and a very considerable number of sausages. Two heads were broken and an Italian almost lost his thumb, but the knife broke on the bone. At five in the morning Willy from the *serra* drove his cart into the Donna Irma brook and broke the axle. At the end there was money enough to buy half an acre.

"But after it was bought - this could only happen in New Jericho - it was found out that the piece of land had belonged to Jochen Bimmelmann himself, the school president - miserable stony soil where no *aipi* ever grew, and without a tree, and high up and far from the road. There was nothing up there, not even a well - only a beautiful view. But Jochen pretended it was the best place for a school - said it gave a long look into the world, and even if children didn't learn very much, they got a broad view! He was immediately expelled from the school

association, but the land was bought and it was too late. The new president was Brick Joseph.”

“Brick Joseph?” I asked. “But he isn’t even from New Jericho.”

“But his whole family is living there, his brothers and all twelve brothers-in-law. They elected him when he said he knew State Assemblyman Piripunsolo, and was going to talk to him. There was another festival to raise the money for his trip to the capital.”

Brick Joseph really had luck, I mean in the flood at Blumenau. Often in life one man’s luck is another’s misfortune. Everybody knows that. The region all around here has been logged over, yet no one has thought of planting a new tree. If it rains for three weeks the water flows through the streets; after four weeks, through the windows, and then the government has to show goodwill. Blumenau was granted five million cruzeiros to paint the houses anew.

“Excellency,” Brick Joseph said to Piripunsolo, “five million is not much more than four million, nine hundred thousand. You can’t help those poor chaps in Blumenau - they get their bath next year again. But the Freedom Party in New Jericho could get its head above water with a hundred contos. And the Party is in deep water, since Poppschitz the merchant has been its representative - the Poppschitz whose dozen count means eleven or thirteen, however he likes it. If we had a school, our Party would be safe again.”

That was a festival when Brick Joseph came back with those hundred contos! Oh, those *churrascos*! At midnight Poppschitz’ brother-in-law stepped onto a broken beer bottle - he simply can’t stand shoes on his feet - and his wife wanted to apply a *cachaça*-soaked dressing. Every drop of *cachaça* was already gone, so she thought, “Alcohol is very much like *cachaça*,” and soaked the dressing in alcohol. Instead of cutting the thread it was fixed with, she took a match to burn it, and all of a sudden Poppschitz’ brother-in-law’s leg was aflame! He jumped out into the courtyard and set fire to the corncobs and straw there. This wouldn’t have mattered much, but there lay the rockets they were planning to shoot at midnight. The Freedom Party members thought the People’s Party wanted to upset the festival, because the money had come from the government, so they drew their revolvers and fired out of the window. It was just luck that they hit nothing but Poppschitz’ pig, and even that only in the part they make ham of, where it doesn’t matter.

“The most beautiful festival, however, was the next. The walls were ready, the roof too, and nothing was lacking but the windows, the doors, the ceiling, and the floor. Both parties offered to furnish the music themselves. The Freedom Party hired the Tenente Gregorio brass band, the People’s Party the jazz band from Babanduwa. And as both were paid and both came, they both had to be put into the ballroom and each one tried to play so loud that the other could not be heard. Such things only happen in New Jericho. Seriously, the walls almost crumbled.

“The next Sunday there was a school assembly and it was discovered that the hundred contos were gone. The bricks had cost seventy contos, the tiles ten, and the rest went to the bricklayers, the brothers-in-law of Brick Joseph. Both parties agreed that he was just a bit too clever, and expelled him from the club.

“They elected Pischinsky, who of course cannot read or write, but is an honorable man - he has neither acres nor bricks to sell. He grows tobacco, which he does not smoke but sells to the last leaf, and that’s that.

“The half-finished school building stood unused for a long time. But now, now it is finally in use. Not as a school, as, of course, it has no doors or windows, but that’s beside the point. After all, even in the new school building no one would be able to learn the alphabet from the

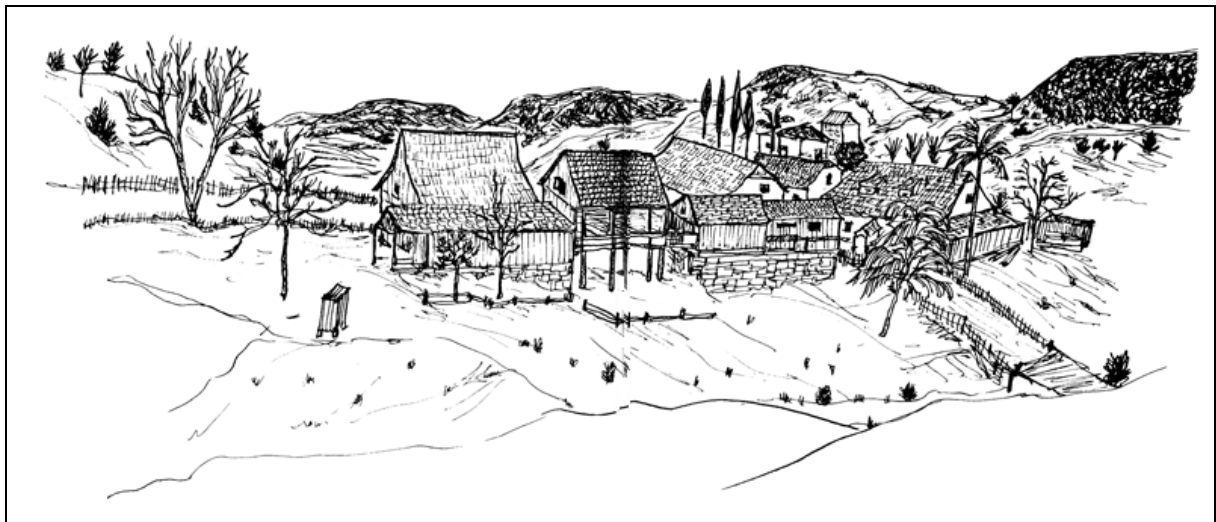
old teacher. Pischinsky has simply leased the building. He needs space to dry his tobacco leaves and there is nothing better than a big building with no windows and no door, high up on a hill where wind and draft enter freely.... In short there are no more school festivals. Unless, naturally, there should be another flood at Blumenau. But that's not sure either, because Brick Joseph, who knows the assemblyman, is not president any more and has no interest in that barn. So it will be used to dry tobacco in.... Things like that only happen in New Jericho!"

With the same words with which the school story ends, another tale begins - the story of the overweight grandmother. Colonists from Donna Irma tell the story with the assurance of eyewitnesses. Those from New Jericho get mad if they're even asked whether something of that sort ever happened. "All made up," one of them told me. "I mean it's a lie! In the first place there is not a single word of truth in the whole story; in the second place it did not happen in New Jericho, but in Itaparunga, as everybody knows."

"The grandma was fat, not the way many other women are, but much, much fatter. She ate a whole duck for breakfast and was hungry again at noon. And once while she was riding to the store - because she hadn't liked for a long time to go on foot - the horse fell down and Grandma fell on top of it. They had to kill the poor mare and her husband bought her a carriage.

"She drove around for quite a while in the carriage, went out to get a ham in one place, six dozen eggs for baking cakes in another, until one day the spring broke and the axle cracked. There she sat, the poor thing, and the carriage was gone.

"But she was a good wife, her husband liked her, and he bought her an oxcart, so that she could get around a bit in the fresh air. It worked out fine, but only until the next Christmas. At Christmas they eat more there among the pious Children of God than all the rest of the year, and sure enough, right after New Year's, it went 'crack.' Grandma's oxcart, too, lay flat in the road.



"So Grandma stayed at home and got even stouter.... She had an armchair, and when she wasn't using it, six little girls could sit there in her place. She kept her good appetite even when she didn't get out into the fresh air.

"In this earthly vale of tears everything comes to an end, also the life of Grandma. One day she gave up her soul to the Creator and slept her last sleep on her bed, which didn't stand on feet, but on six tree trunks. She wasn't hungry any more.

“Yes - but there was no coffin big enough to hold her. And even if they had made one, it couldn’t have been gotten out through the door. Perhaps it could have gotten in, if it had been tilted on one side, but get out again - never! And if enough of the wall had been ripped away the roof would have fallen in. So there they stood around her and racked their brains.

“All this happened at a time when around there the virgin forest was still standing; trees as old as the hills were felled every day, and the ax and the saw seldom rested. Even the young ones knew how to handle the long saw blades.... To cut the story short: with all due respect for the majesty of death and with perfect skill, Grandma was sliced in two with the saw, and each half put into a separate big casket and the flowers were piled on top of them. Two wagons drove, one after the other, to the churchyard, and behind them came the minister with a single speech.

“Things like that only happen...”

My own house officially stands in New Jericho. As there is continuing tension between Donna Irma and New Jericho, citizens of the latter picturesque village might consider me a deserter or worse if I did not at least add to my account: “Bumm’s honey-cake factory, standing in the village center of New Jericho, across from Poppschitz’s butcher shop, is the most respectable and the best-smelling enterprise in the entire region.” I make this addition most willingly, since I always try to remain “*au dessus de la mêlée*,” and particularly in this cold war between the two municipalities on which I look down from my veranda.

The real causes of the conflict - this is a common feature of all wars since the Trojan - cannot be sufficiently reconstructed from documents. The main reason for it probably is the fact that simple minds cannot hate very faraway or abstract things. The adversary is within reach, and the reasons for fighting automatically arise. One’s neighbor is - especially where communications are scarce - still the best enemy.

A historical materialist will indicate as a motive of the tension (war would be too strong word) that the meanest hog merchants of the county all live in New Jericho. People in Donna Irma say it all springs from envy. In New Jericho they have neither a post office nor a pharmacy, and that’s what they simply can’t take. They are just mad because they want a town clerk of their own. Those in New Jericho pretend that there are already too many Italians and *caboclos* in Donna Irma, and do not see why they should travel so far to pay the road tax or have a tooth pulled. To such reproaches people in Donna Irma reply that the needlessly wide strip leading from New Jericho to Itanduva was opened when the people of New Jericho wanted to carry a ladder to the hamlet, but carried it sidewise and cut down all the trees in its way.

XX

Perhaps the tension between Donna Irma and New Jericho arises simply from the fact that the people of New Jericho are really a little different. It is difficult to categorize them in the usual terms. The Brazilians call them "Germans," the Germans call them "Russians," and they - of course they should know best - call themselves "God's Own Children." There is some truth in every description. They speak Santa Catarina German; the old understand a bit of Russian. The Bible says the reign of Heaven is promised to the meek. If I were to hunt for one more phrase to describe them, I would call them the "wise dwellers in the back country."

Some time ago man ceased to be a rare animal on Earth. Families grew into tribes, tribes became states. The development was rapid. States became mighty organizations, pretending they were necessary to human life. They cared for the individual only as the human body cares about a single corpuscle swimming in its blood. States pretend to rule territories and really rule individuals. They thrive because they take more than they give.

The more people, the mightier the state. The mightier the state, the less safe is the individual. He is taught that it is "*dulce et decorum*" to die for it. (Horace, who claimed that it was sweet and decorous to fall for the homeland, fled so quickly from the only battle he ever took part in that he was later able to compose the above immortal line.)

The way from the Ten Commandments to the ten thousand or one hundred thousand laws and bylaws that legislators have turned out in their tireless and still far from finished endeavors was very short, and every one of them took away a bit of the freedom our good, savage Botocudos still enjoyed fifty years ago.

It is not astonishing that there have always been people who have tried to flee the state and look for a place where taxes, tributes, forced labor, and military service did not reach the individual. The word "outlaw" (*ex-lex*) has not always had a bad meaning. Once it meant the man who was not subject to law, like the emperor himself. Not being subject to law - and not being forced to fight it - is the privilege of those who live on far-off outer fringes of civilization.

It is no pleasure to be ruled. The lost paradise, the Golden Age, was a lawless state - Ovid himself has testified that it had no judges, which means no legislators either, and consequently no law enforcement. Small wonder if those looking for future paradises thought about reconstructing the Golden Age with a stateless pattern of life.

After two or three dozen Caesars the people were tired of the Roman Empire. They dreamed about another way of life and St. Augustine presented them with the idea of a new one: of the *civitas Dei*, the state of God. The wish to realize it became so strong that the Empire fell and the Church rose upon those hills from whence it had ruled the world. But soon it was proclaimed that there was nothing sweeter and more decorous than to die for the new state. It soon had the same armies, the same prisons as the old Empire, and only the stakes to burn people alive were essentially new, the ancient funeral pyre having been reserved for the dead.

After a couple of centuries the people tried the worldly state again, and in some places, and for short spells of time, went far in curtailing its rights against the individual. The illusion of growing freedom was pitifully short-lived. Financial empires rose and were only a bit less cruel than the one which pretended to care only for the salvation of the soul.

Then the idea rose that mighty industry and finance should yield to a benign state which, controlling all means of production and all the land and power, could renew the eternal bliss of the lost paradise, distributing its riches to everybody.... Strangely enough, the resulting state seemed no nearer to paradise than an ant's nest, perhaps even farther away, because ants do not seem to mind losing their personal freedom. In a surprisingly short time Communism turned out to be a very bad religion, and anti-Communist dictatorship, using identical methods and a different nomenclature, proved by no means better. Unfortunately the two types of states have not even solved the problem of coexistence which God and the devil have so perfectly solved in their own spheres.

As long as there are state planners and empire builders there will be state deserters and empire dodgers. They flee.

The forefathers of the settlers beyond New Jericho fled from the Prussian state and went hopefully to the plains of Russia about two hundred years ago. Presently some of them realized that in Russia there was a state, too, and fled to the outer fringes, to Siberia and the Caucasus, in order to enjoy the protection of distance, the peace of the frontier. When finally the state found them there, they came to Brazil, to the Brazil that lies beyond the pavement, the regions other immigrants shun and fear. They founded New Jericho.... They knew from the Bible that old Jericho was conquered by people who had fled from the Egyptian state and its czarlike or Stalinlike Pharaoh.... New Jericho is the end of the bus line, and the place where electric light ceases its attempt to denature night into day. The "Russians" feel at home in the valley beyond it.

Even if their forebears, while in Russia, learned as little of its language as their modern descendants⁴ have learned of the language of Camõens, yet they brought away with them certain traits which seem genuinely Russian. The history of the Russians shows that distrust has played a major role in all their political actions. Neither Czarist nor Communist rulers have trusted their friends, let alone strangers - and distrust is the stone wall we run into in the back country beyond bus and electricity. At the same time, the Russian is ready to believe in whatever he accepts as manifestations of holiness, and the Rasputin or Stalin types readily attract devoted believers. It is no end difficult to make friends in the "Russian valley." God's Own Children, to which sect nearly all of the "Russians" belong, called a preacher from Germany about thirty years ago. His daughter was then five years old. She has grown up and married here, and is now the mother of six. "We want to move away," she says. "We feel like foreigners. You stay a stranger forever among the 'Russians.'"

Yet at the same time their trust is sometimes unlimited. Some years ago a man on the *serra* began to walk around in a long robe and let his hair and beard grow. "He is like Christ," the people said. But the man did not content himself with the role of Christ. He wanted more: he believed he was God and had to slay his son in order to save mankind from sin, and he did it with an ax. Even the police felt that was too much, and arrested him. The strange man hanged himself in prison (or was assisted in doing so) and nothing remained but the question, "Was he a sinner or a saint?"

The next strange personage was a type with Chaplin's mustache and a curl over the forehead: Hitler, who had fled from Berlin through a subterranean tunnel and had arrived in a U-boat. The "Russians" were by no means Nazi sympathizers and knew very little about the war - but here was a great and famous man in distress. "Sure he's Hitler," they said. "There he sits and writes letters to presidents and kings all the time!" The false Hitler was far more sympathetic

⁴ erratum: *descendants*

than the original and caused no harm but the death of a great number of chickens and ducks that he was invited to eat.

His successor was a young man from the Balkans who spoke Croatian and a bit of Russian and German and said he was a professor of medicine. False doctors generally try to look dignified and elegant, use complicated words and contraptions. Not this young man: he drank with everybody who entered Poppschitz' tavern; he invited his patients, from whom he had taken three thousand cruzeiros, to a steak dinner for thirty; he sang cheerful songs and declared in the case of every patient that the liver was "disequilibrated" and needed twenty injections. The number of his patients increased rapidly. The liver disease seemed epidemic. Younger ladies were particularly affected and had to stay at Poppschitz' for stricter supervision. An exceptionally difficult case was, of course, Mrs. Suspenders, who had to take quarters at Poppschitz' for a longer period. She returned home only when the grief-stricken hog merchant threatened suicide. The professor started to borrow important sums in order to build a hospital and give New Jericho a medical center. He certainly would have done it, if an unemployed waiter of similar features had not been wanted by a succession of police stations throughout the state. An expert in Brazilian administration will not be astonished to learn that the professor disappeared a few hours prior to the arrival of the law enforcers. Nothing was found but a bag containing Argentine revolvers, evidently from the period predating his medical career. Now the citizens of New Jericho come to me in quest of a medicine for "disequilibrated" livers.

Anyone who can wear a mask will find people to believe in him. Swindlers have a sixth sense for suckers. The best chance in New Jericho would be for one who pretended to have arrived from Mars, Venus, or Pluto and wanted to study the manufacture of those spicy German honey cakes known as *Lebkuchen* in the most famous factory in the Solar System. Not that astronomy is the favorite hobby of Jerichonians, but on paths no book has traveled, science fiction has found the way. A grandmother with relatives in Germany has subscribed to a weekly in the field of flying-saucer research and has opened a new dream world. Pious persons need miracles and those of the Bible are distant. The wine of Cana is no more, but the friendly lady from the invisible planet behind the moon, who lives among us and wants to find out how mankind can best be helped, may knock at our door any day. Angels' hair falls slowly from the upper regions. Venusians send copper plates with mysterious inscriptions. Said grandmother has ordered a telescope. When the clouds fly low and airplanes high the Jerichonians stop capeening and listen. "Maybe our brethren from the planets arriving?"

The planets are distant. The best real, tangible enterprise is closer to home: the *Lebkuchen* factory. This model enterprise is an example of the only sure way the European in Brazil can achieve a really secure, bourgeois existence: by producing something in the Interior.

The Brazilian, a descendant of the Portuguese peasant, that primitive proletarian of a remote corner of civilization, lacks technical knowledge. He does not manufacture anything, but passes his life in a shack or in a government office.

The descendants of the Negro slaves are very much like their former masters. Anyone who is able to take honey and flour and produce such a surprising object as a *Lebkuchen* - produce it where manpower and honey are cheap, and then send the cake where money can be found, namely into the city - has solved his, his children's, and his grandchildren's problems. All sixteen of Bumm's employees - young girls and the aunts of the neighborhood who are too old to capeen - bake, sugar, pack, and ship *Lebkuchen* and gingerbread. The trucks carry them away and bring flour. Wood for the oven comes from the forest. The old *Lebkuchen* recipe brought from the Russia of the Romanovs is framed on the wall. It is still as valid a document as on the day it was written.

The *Lebkuchen* is a sweet and dependable support of life. For the “Russians” the sweet-smelling factory is a strong fortress. The strength of the “Russians” lies, despite their oddities, in their accurate sense of their own limitations. They know that in the city the houses are high and the pavement is hard. There anyone who falls will get hurt. Nothing thrives there. Everybody in the city is a servant. They all obey masters. Freedom is the property of one who owns his own land, who grows his own food. You have to have your own fence.

That was true in Russia a long time ago. It is true in Brazil. That was a good reason for coming here. (“We did not come long ago,” said old Mrs. Pischinsky. “We came after the First World War. The Bolsheviks took over in Russia. You’ve probably heard about it already.”) Here they felt perfectly safe for thirty years. If you look at the women in the church of God’s Own Children you notice how far we are even from Donna Irma: the hair of the girls is in braids; the women’s is done up in buns. The great flood of permanent waves was dammed by the walls of New Jericho.

Now the city seems to be menacingly closing in. If you pour a bucketful of sand into your hog before selling it, only to correct its weight, you may get an invitation from the judge in town and you actually have to drive there. The farm becomes crowded and the question is how to stop the young people from drifting into the city. It’s bad enough that the boys are sent to Rio for military service (conscription exists virtually only in the South, where the population is of European stock) and learn idle ways, and that the girls go into service somewhere until a young man comes along.... The “Russians” were not “cast up” on a frontier. They went for good reasons and wish to stay there.

How did people from Wolhynia know that the valleys beyond the Itajai River afford good fields for the planting of manioc? How do our “Russians” know, after walking barefoot around New Jericho for a couple of years, that on the Uruguayan border there are fertile plains as wide, as free, as in Siberia - and that the wheat flourishes there? Did the knowledge enter the biscuit factory with the flour sacks? Can one simply feel such a thing?

Those who in the city seem helpless and unable to find a street travel a thousand miles and find their way and the soil to plow. The soil they know. This is a sort of wisdom which has nothing to do with knowledge.

Brazilian economists imagined that this country could live from the breakfast of its neighbors, even if it furnished only the black beverage for it. “Why plant foodstuffs,” they asked, “if a sack of coffee brings a carload of wheat?” Hunger and inflation answer this question. The only parts of Brazil where people eat every day - and is it any different elsewhere? - are those which produce their own daily bread. The frontier defends against the monster state, the wheat fields against the monster hunger. “One hectare of wheat gives bread and cake for four persons for a whole year.” They do not teach you this in school, but it is good and sufficient if you know it.

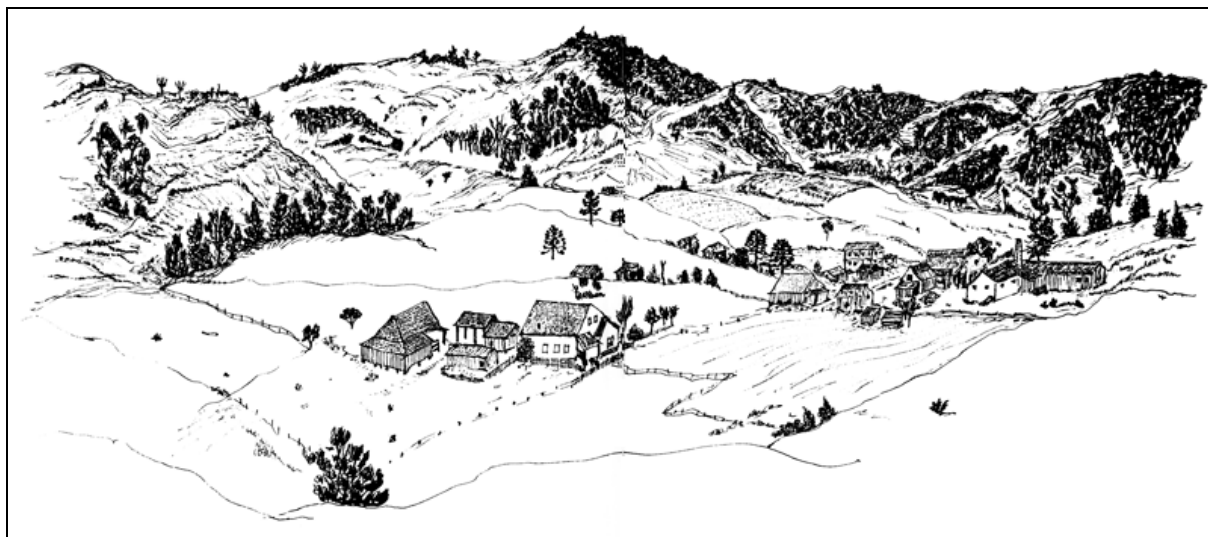
There is an endless grassland at the frontier of Uruguay and the Argentine. The native landowner will lease you a few thousand hectares for a trifle. You buy a tractor on installments, gets seeds from the government, and you get down to work. A man who has the gesture of sowing in his wrist is soon capable of driving a tractor. The first harvest pays for the tractor. Next year the Gypsies (for everybody sticks to his trade in the last analysis) bring the next tractor piecemeal across the frontier. The third year the wheat farmer is plowing his own land, and sends for his relatives. “Good place to live,” he tells them. “Bread for everybody. Room for all.” The pull of the wheat fields, where nothing is missing but Europe’s poppies and cornflowers, has nothing in common with that of the gold rush or the coffee fever.

Furniture and Bible are loaded upon an old truck and you move slowly on. There will be a church at the wheat fields, too, where you may sing your old hymns. There will be a brook there in which to baptize the newly converted Children of God. The trip does not lead far. You still stay on the outer fringes where you find space and security.

Not all the “Russians” have gone yet, but the temptation is strong. It could happen that the valley will keep nothing but its name, and the Italians will move down from the *serra*. They are astonished that the wooden houses are so heavy and strong, as though those who built them expected a Siberian winter. They wonder that there are many pear trees, and that the *colonia* was sold so cheap. Polenta comes upon the hearth where *aipi* and brown gravy used to be cooked every day.

XXI

It is Sunday afternoon and the diseases take a rest. I am allowed to do nothing and to look out of the window. "The frame of the picture I see is mine," I say very proudly. I look at the country I consider my own, because I know it as far off as the distant houses I still have illusions about, as I have not yet entered them as a precursor of death. I know that the farther one gets from the road on which the bus travels, the rarer the houses become. They stand like castles dominating corn and manioc fields and slopes; the bush is slowly reconquering land where in a hundred years a new virgin forest could grow. (An orchid seed develops in ten short years into a new, flowering plant.) There are valleys I have not yet seen but that I can imagine: wooden houses, lit only by an oil lamp at night - the oil lamp which saw the birth of the greatest literary masterpieces; kitchen of ballroom size, smoky, with gigantic chunks of ham and bacon over the hearth; beds in whose corn straw people sleep so incredibly deeply, because they have capeened themselves to sleep; tobacco-drying barns, where entire families sort and bundle tobacco leaves, the companies having discovered that their work is cheaper than that of the worker in town; stables where cows transform, by means of their secret chemical process, grass into milk, so that people may cook, sleep, and sort out tobacco leaves. If I feel nostalgic, I am not longing for the big cities I know (and where only the libraries are mysterious and forestlike), but for these valleys, for the flowers I have not yet seen, for beautiful children - as beautiful and mysterious as the flowers - for a silence ever deeper than mine.



But the landscape I see as a blue-gray stripe behind the *serra* - and that only at noon, when the mist has disappeared - does not belong to my valley any more. I have walked from the home of black Pedro to the pear trees of the "Russians," and must say good-by to my friends who have accompanied me.

I am afraid I have already said too much. Some time ago a reporter (who also owns newspapers and had been an ambassador) flew in his private plane over the region and wrote about it. He noted that there is a harmonious distribution of forest and pastures, very much as in Europe - a region he has also studied from the plane. He concluded from up there that the farms were independent to a high degree and that the fate of the inhabitants was not decided at the coffee and sugar exchanges in New York. He remarked that an air strip would open up the region for the tourist trade and that it would be possible - if only the roads were better - to

build marvelous hotels on the *serra*, where the tired citizens of São Paulo could take a rest and relax during the hot season.

Didn't he say the essentials? Shouldn't I follow the example of the colonist who wrote twenty lines about twenty-five years and after the proud words, "the rest was work," put the pen down?

Perhaps I should add that we have mimosas, as yellow and fragrant as those on the road to Frascati ... and incredibly small humming birds in shades of green velvet, of gray and white ... and oversized glowworms, with eyes like faraway airplanes ... that the valley boasts the most perfect rainbows in the world. ... Or shouldn't I mention that no day belongs entirely to autumn: only mornings and evenings are misty, noon is always light, green and golden? Should I tell - or is it self-evident? - how long rain dissolves the roads, so that every house becomes an island on which the days never pass, and you look out over the veiled forests and quote: "*Je suis le roi d'un pays pluvieux*" ... and how the wind in summertime sweeps over the valley right from the Atlantic and carries the sea gulls as far as New Jericho?

Whatever I might say, I know every piece of writing is condemned to remain a fragment forever.

Epilogue

I finished this book in the conviction that it described a final state of my life. Is there anything that could change the life of a pharmacist in the interior of Brazil? They all settle down somewhere and continue an everyday routine. It is different with doctors - real, Brazilian doctors. They put up operating rooms, call them hospitals, and start appendix-hunting. Every man has an appendix; it is only a question of rhetoric and authority to convince him that he would be better off without it. Having one's appendix removed is fortunately, in a certain primitive society, a form of "keeping up with the Joneses." So the interests of doctors and patients meet at MacBurney's point, the appendix is removed, and even if not, there remains a scar to be shown occasionally. After a certain number of appendectomies the doctor returns to the city.

The pharmacist stays on. He gradually simplifies his methods; he loses his ambitions and becomes like his patients, those who in their turn have become very much like the plants they grow or those which grow around them. Living always among plants makes people plantlike. (It is the steady contact with other men that makes them into beasts.) One fears, rather than aspires to, life in the city. "*Nihil est quod metuum nisi reditum ad urbes*" - Petrarch ends one of his letters: "There is nothing I fear but getting back to town."

I could not avoid this development in myself, nor do I wish to - but my bear, my hopeless Latin bear did. The book no publisher seemed to care for got back to the cities, which are also the habitat of books! And which are, strangely, the places from which comes a precious article: letters.

Poets who have given up hope publish their poems at their own expense. They realize that books are not thrown away with so much contempt as manuscripts. A book is an object. A manuscript is only a container of thoughts. A book is read because people wonder what it may say. Manuscripts of authors are not read because nobody is really curious to know what an author has to offer, on whom no publisher has wagered his money.

Mankind progresses. Once it was sufficient to write a book. Then came the typewriter and "longhand" was at once classified with the hieroglyphs as an object for studies, not for reading. Manuscripts, sufficiently aged, were still kept and sold, but no word was read unless typed out. Now we have almost reached the stage where authors have to print their books themselves if they want a publisher to read them before turning them down.

The opportunity to print my Latin bear came with an Inter-American Congress of Pathology. Translating medical congress proceedings is a strange job, as it calls for very different skills and is therefore well paid. It is very much as with riding a bicycle: you do not get real money for it. Nor are you paid for playing "Home, Sweet Home" on the violin. Blowing smoke rings from a cigar is also a hopeless skill if you want to make money. But if you ride your bike, play the violin, and blow smoke rings at the same time any good circus will hire you and pay you good money. If you are able to translate into English a Portuguese paper on ganglia cell changes, as quickly as one who has ten minutes to report about ten years of research reads it, you may go - at least for a week - into the publishing business.

That was exactly what I did, when an old friend remembered my past experiences and achievements in this particular field and called me to the city for a short while.

To have money means to be tempted to spend it. Even states possessing printing presses are tempted to spend more money than they can print. How should I have resisted the temptation to print my translation and see my name on the title page of a Latin book? I recalled the years

in Roman libraries: reading Latin books only meant being a visitor in the Republic of Humanists. To have written a Latin book meant full citizenship. A stateless refugee is always longing for some sort of citizenship, even of a state which is not issuing passports.

Is the Republic of Humanists really unreal? The Knights of Malta have lost their island long ago, but still send ambassadors to courts of kings.... A representative of Goa is still in Lisbon, claiming the colony has not been lost. The difference between reality and fiction is a matter of definition.

In order to enter the fictive Republic (this is where we feel a common border between reality and fiction) one has to pay - to pay real money. The rights to *Winnie-the-Pooh*, or, as I preferred to call him, *Winnie ille Pu*, belonged to the estate of his author. I obtained the address of the agents and boldly asked them to sell me the rights. Even relatively small amounts of money, when carried close enough to one's skin, are capable of overcoming certain inhibitions against which psychotherapy would fight in vain.

The agents were - that's evidently what they are paid for - concise, cool, and objective. They said, "No."

"No" is an excellent position to start bargaining from. I did what they had expected me to do: I asked if I could buy permission to print about three hundred copies, one single edition.

They considered my offer, quite rightly, a sort of unconditional surrender. They said, "Yes," and added, "but you must pay ten guineas and are not allowed to sell your translation. You may give it away free of charge. And you must send us ten copies."

Only a madman - they evidently thought - could think about translating a children's book into Latin. Moreover it must be a wealthy madman, with lots of spare time, bored with golf playing and Caribbean cruises, a man living for his hobbies.

This last supposition being the only right guess of the series, I tried to bargain.

"Do I not possess already the right to give my translation away, printed or handwritten, free of charge?" I timidly asked.

"You have," they admitted. "But pay three guineas anyhow."

I was tempted to ask if three pounds wouldn't do, but I liked the term "guinea" too much. Do not tailors and doctors still count in guineas? Is not the guinea a nonexistent, dreamlike, fictive coin? I found it was right to enter a fictive Republic paying my dues in fictive units. I paid.

Now I had the right of printing three hundred copies, but lacked the funds to do so. The rest of my riches could not pay for more than one hundred copies.

I had read years ago a Swedish essay about the chances of finding an old book. "You can find old books," the author, a librarian, said, "only if they were printed in sufficiently small numbers." Very small editions are treasured in libraries and private collections. They are listed in handbooks for book lovers. Books printed by the millions disappear without leaving a trace because nobody cares for them. Old copies of newspapers vanish; not one of a million survives. Thrillers disappear by a mysterious mechanism the authors of thrillers cannot solve.

A hundred copies, I thought, will make an edition small enough to assure me immortality.

My position was definitely more agreeable than that of the average publisher. I did not have to bother about publicity, retail orders, profit or loss. All I had to do was to find somebody who was willing to set a Latin book in type.

Printing Latin books in São Paulo, in Brazil, I am tempted to say, is a typical Hungarian business. I soon found a Hungarian typesetter willing to do the job by night on the machines of an Italian daily ... the machines had certain technical imperfections, but these he promised to repair. He started right away.

In saying that printing Latin - or translating into Latin in Brazil - is a typical Hungarian business, I may be wrong. Many Hungarians were forced into emigration by prewar and postwar persecution and had to earn a living. In exile one cannot live on diplomas, privileges, acquired rights, or inherited property. One has to rack one's brain and invent a trade for himself. If one's genius helps one, so much the better. I think it was despair and determination which made Hungarians invent electronic calculating devices, hydrogen bombs, gadgets for the atomic pile, and theories about the structure of the atom nucleus. The same factors prompt a simpler spirit to smuggle needles across the border or to print Latin books by night.

It took some time to transform a number of sheets of cheap paper into a hundred copies of *Winnie ille Pu*. My friends helped me pass this time by explaining to me what I should have done instead. They pointed out that shoes were useful even where social conventions do not necessarily call for their use, and that I would have more social prestige in town as the owner of a hat. I had no arguments. How should I have explained to persons living simply in South America that I wanted to become a citizen of the Republic of Humanists? I confess I did not really listen to useful advice. I was busy figuring out the list of persons I wanted to surprise with the Latin bear.

Ancient authors sent their works to kings and queens. The method has much to recommend it. Johann Sebastian Bach, for example, sent six concertos to the Elector of Brandenburg. They were neither acknowledged nor performed, but two hundred years later they were found untouched in the same drawer royalty used to bury gifts of well-educated subjects. So I destined copy number one to His Royal Highness, the Prince of Wales.... Kings are scarce nowadays, so I destined one to an old friend who happened to be the Royal Danish Librarian.... As to princes of literature, I thought about Robert Graves, still able to write Latin verse if he felt like it. The Republic of Humanists is in certain respects like the Noble Guard of the Pope: an army in which lieutenant is the lowest possible rank.

It may be hard to sell a hundred copies of a Latin book; it is easier to give them away - and certainly more exciting.

I had sent a few to newspapers and periodicals. Only one mentioned it as "the oddest of all odd gifts ever received." No compliment, but at least a superlative, I thought. Oddly enough, a letter from the editor followed. "Could you send us another copy?" it read. "After several attempts were made to pinch it, we had to lock up the existing copy in our safe."

That sounded far more encouraging.

Every letter which crosses a continent, an ocean, and finds its way through the intricate channels of the Brazilian mails (letter writing is considered a pastime for foreigners in a country of illiterates) is a wonder no less miraculous than those letters the *Legenda Aurea* reports as having been brought by ravens to hermits in the Egyptian desert.

One of the letters certainly fell into the category of miracles. It was the one from the Royal Danish Librarian, short and matter of fact. It said: "Winnie is known and loved in Sweden under the name of Nalle. The great Swedish publishing house Svenska Bökforlaget has decided to accept your Latin version which I submitted to them. They are going to publish two thousand copies this Christmas. Half of it will be distributed free and they'll try to sell the rest - if you don't mind and agree."

Of course I did not mind and agreed.

For one who lives among plants, nothing seems more difficult than to realize the speeding up of events. Plants have a steady rate of growth. Every tree knows exactly how slowly it should stretch. But once the trees become pulp and paper they lose their innate sense of time. Books may sleep for centuries; sometimes they grow and multiply with incredible speed.

Winnie ille Pu was one of them. The little white-covered booklet with its uncounted misprints and displaced letters made a career. The Swedish edition was followed by British and American ones.... It seemed the Republic of Humanists was wider than we had surmised. Not hundreds, not thousands, but tens of thousands of *Winnies* were printed, and - I could hardly believe it - read.

Figures are unexpressive. Even weeks on the best-seller list do not tell anything about the real fate of a book. It is nice to collect favorable reviews, but they do not tell the whole story either.

Fragments of the story can only be pieced together from letters. Perhaps one out of a thousand readers sits down to tell me his impressions, ask his questions, give his advice; that makes a hundred and fifty for 150,000 - quite a lot of mail for a post office which seldom handles such an amount of correspondence in a year.

One of the White Fathers of Africa (a Catholic missionary order) found the book in Rhodesia.... A gentleman from New Zealand found it in the ship's library when he sailed back to England.... A lawyer in Australia who had already translated "Jabberwocky" wired to London to get a copy.

Really, I had never felt lonesome. Loneliness is a feeling of city-dwellers, of people who never walk on earth unless they go to the cemetery. But letters really showed me that there are human relations other than those between doctor and patient, which, although important, have their limitations and tend to be less intimate when the pains subside.

The secret society of those who try to write about modern subjects in Latin, who play the game of exchanging Latin epistles, as if Bach and Voltaire were still in full activity, was not the only company aroused by the bear. The other was the fraternity of book collectors. Totally uninterested in the perfect and faultless editions of the real publishers, they wanted copies of the first one, the one without illustrations and with misprints. Human nature shows sympathy for imperfections and cherishes aberrations; I could have become a rich man if I hadn't given away my treasures. I could retrace but a very few - but I had found friends among the lovers of first editions, and they too joined the company of letter furnishers.

Letter writing has lost much of its romance nowadays. I do not think its excitement can ever be replaced by long-distance calls; telephones just kill a very particular type of human relations. Only one who has lived on an island where the mail arrives twice or three times a year really knows what letters mean, how much more written words weigh than spoken ones. My valley is a sort of island. I enjoy reading words that have not yet been pronounced in the forest, and that come from very far away. It is very much like sipping old wine from faraway countries, or tea from Darjeeling; it is good to overcome the distance between libraries and forests.

Winnie ille Pu, my hobby, has turned into "my success." Not one that can be measured in money. (To transform a book into a checkbook is a very primitive sort of success.) I gauge the amount of success by the names of the faraway friends who occasionally visit me with their letters, and who save me a dangerous journey into the outside world I prefer to know in their descriptions.

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