

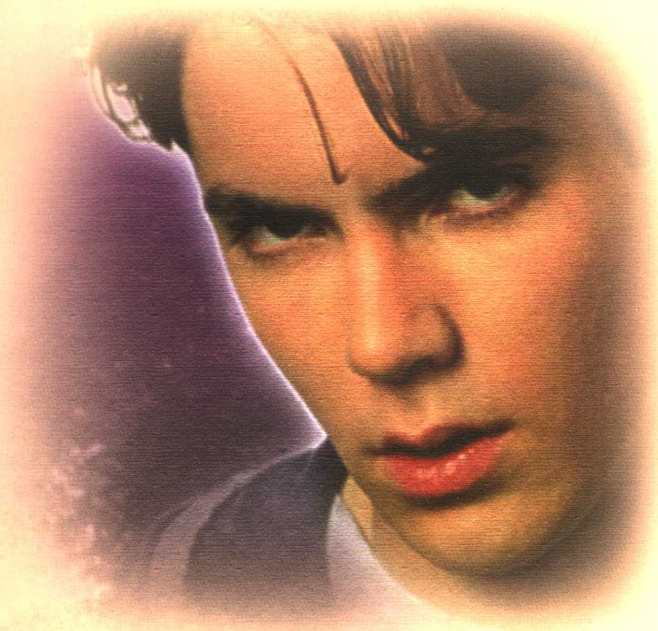


# 少年维特之烦恼

*Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe*

## THE SORROWS OF YOUNG WERTHER

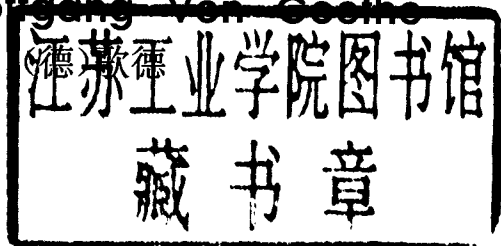
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广州出版社

The Sorrows of  
Young Werther  
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## 序言

世界文字名著是人类文化遗产中的一块瑰宝。在历史的长河中，世界文学名著的诸位作者，以其独具的慧眼、巧妙的构思、流畅的文笔以及逼真的刻画，为我们后人留下了宝贵的财富。我们所出版的这套《世界文学名著全英文读本》，正是对广大读者的一种奉献。

《世界文学名著全英文读本》奉献给读者的特点有其三：首先，这套名著作为英文版的原版图书，它既不做删节，也不做注释，更不做人为的改动。它忠实地尊重原著的风格，提供给读者的是原汁原味的原貌。其次，这套名著作为精选的图书，它是在请教了有关学者、专家和翻译人员后，结合译文本在我国读者中的影响力和受欢迎程度，从众多的名著中精心遴选出来的。再次，这套名著的出版，本着“以人为本”，在装帧上尽可能突出精美的特色，在价格上尽可能突出公道的定位理念。让读者在阅读名著的英文原著中，尽情地发挥各自的丰富想象，“窥一滴水而知大海”，以求对世界文化有个整体的了解。

呈上一套名著精选，愿您终生受益匪浅！

## PREFACE

The world masterwork in the humanity cultural heritage is one part of the treasures. In historical perpetual flow, the authors of world masterworks with their discerning eyes, original in conception, writing with ease and grace, as well as lifelike description left the precious wealth to our posterity. We have published this set of 《World Masterworks in English Well – Selected》 as a great offer to the reading public.

《World Masterworks in English Well – Selected》 has its three characteristics. It takes the original English edition and it does not delete and also does not make any annotation and modification. It's true to the original style, the original taste and flavour original condition for the readers. Next, This set of 《World Masterworks in English Well – Selected》 has been elaborately selected from multitudinous masterworks according to the translated texts which have made great influence and favourable extent among readers in our country after consulting with the concerned scholars, the experts and the translation personnel. Lastly, in the light of the spirit of 《World Masterworks in English Well – Selected》 has been mounted and designed as far as possible prominent fine features as well as justice price idea. And it gives the rein to the readers' imagination by reading them. "To get through a water drop but to know the sea" is for us to have an overall understanding the world culture.

It is hoped that this set of 《World Masterworks in English Well – Selected》 will provide realistic masterwork enjoyments for readers for ever.

## ❧ BOOK ONE ❧

4 May 1771

How happy I am to be away! My dear friend, what a thing is the heart of Man! To leave you, whom I love so, from whom I was inseparable, and to be happy! I know that you will forgive me. Were not my other attachments hand-picked by Fate to beset a heart such as mine with fears? Poor Leonore!<sup>1</sup> And yet I was innocent. Was it my fault that, while I was taking pleasure and amusement in the wilful charms of her sister, a passion was growing in that poor heart? And yet—am I wholly innocent? Did I not nurture her feelings? Did I not take delight in those utterly true expressions of her nature which so often made us laugh, though they were far from ridiculous? Did I not—Oh, what a creature is Man, that he may bewail himself! I promise, dear friend, I promise I shall improve, and will not keep on chewing over some morsel of misfortune doled out by Fate, as I always have done; I mean to enjoy the present moment, and what is past will be over and done with. Of course you are right, my friend, that the pains people endure would be less if only—God knows why they are made that way!—if only they did not put so much imaginative energy into recalling the memory of past misfortune, rather than bear an indifferent present with equanimity.

Will you be so good as to tell my mother I shall deal with her business as well as I can and will give her news of it very soon. I have spoken to my aunt,<sup>2</sup> and found her far from being the wicked female she is made out to be at home. She is a buxom, vigorous woman with the kindest of hearts. I explained my mother's complaints concerning the portion of the inheritance that was withheld from her; she told me her reasons and motives, and the conditions on which she would be prepared to hand over everything, more indeed than we have demanded—In short, I do not wish to write about it now, but tell my



mother it will all turn out well. And once again, dear friend, I have found while seeing to this little matter that misunderstandings and lethargy perhaps lead to more complications in the affairs of the world than trickery and wickedness. At least, the two latter are surely less common.

For the rest, I feel most contented here. Solitude is precious balm to my heart in these paradisiac parts; and the abundance of this youthful season gives warmth to a heart that is oft tremble with horror. Every tree, every hedgerow is a posy of blossoms, and one could wish to be a cockchafer, floating in a sea of wonderful scents and finding all one's nourishment there.

The town itself is disagreeable, but on the other hand there is an inexpressible natural beauty all around. It was this that moved the late Count von M. to lay out a garden<sup>3</sup> on one of these hills, which slope against each other in the most delightful and various of ways and form the prettiest of valleys. The garden is a simple one, and the moment one enters it one feels that it was designed not by some scientific gardener but by a feeling heart intending to take pleasure here. I have already shed many a tear for the count, in the tumbledown little summerhouse that was his favourite spot and now is mine too. Soon I shall be master of the garden; in these few days the gardener has already become attached to me, and he will not have cause to regret it.

### 10 May

A wonderful serenity has taken possession of my entire soul, as these sweet spring mornings have, which I am enjoying with my whole heart. I am alone and rejoicing in my life in these parts, which were created for just such souls as mine. I am so happy, dear friend, so absorbed in this feeling of peaceful existence, that my art is suffering. I could not draw now, not a single line, and yet I have never been a greater painter than in these moments. When the vapours rise about me in this lovely valley, and the sun shines high on the surface of the impenetrable darkness of my forest, and only single rays steal into the inner sanctum, and I lie in the long grass by the tumbling brook, and



lower down, close to the earth, I am alerted to the thousand various little grasses; when I sense the teeming of the little world among the stalks, the countless indescribable forms of the grubs and flies, closer to my heart, and feel the presence of the Almighty who created us in His image, the breath of the All-loving who bears us aloft in perpetual joy and holds us there; my friend! if it grows dusky then before my eyes, and the world about me and the heavens lie peaceful in my soul like a lover—then I am often filled with longing, and think: ah, if only you could express this, if only you could breathe onto the paper in all its fullness and warmth what is so alive in you, so that it would mirror your soul as your soul is the mirror of God in His infinity!—My friend—But it will be the end of me. The glory of these visions, their power and magnificence, will be my undoing.

### 12 May

I do not know whether treacherous spirits haunt these parts, or whether the warm, heavenly fantasy that makes everything seem like paradise is in my own heart. Right outside the town there is a spring,<sup>4</sup> a spring that holds me in thrall like Melusine<sup>5</sup> and her sisters.—You go down a little slope and come to a vault where some twenty steps descend to where the clearest of water pours forth from the marble rock. The low wall about the spring above, the tall trees that shade the place, the coolness of the spot, all of this has something both attractive and awesome. Not a day goes by but I spend an hour sitting there. And the girls come out from the town to fetch water,<sup>6</sup> that most innocent and necessary of tasks which in former times was done by the daughters of kings themselves. When I sit there the patriarchal ways come vividly to life about me, and I see them all, the ancestral fathers, making friends and courting by the spring, and I sense the benevolent spirits that watch over springs and wells. Oh, anyone who cannot share this feeling must never have refreshed himself at a cool spring after a hard day's summer walking.



13 May

You ask if you should send me my books?—My dear fellow, I implore you, for God's sake keep the things from me! I do not want to be led on, stimulated, inspired any more, for this heart of mine is turbulent enough of its own accord; what I need is soothing lullabies, and I have found them in abundance in my Homer.<sup>7</sup> How often do I lull my tumultuous blood to rest; for you have seen nothing as changeably unquiet as this heart. Dear friend! do I need to tell you that, you who have so often endured seeing me pass from sorrow to excessive joy, from sweet melancholy to destructive passion? And I am treating my poor heart like an ailing child; every whim is granted. Tell no one of this; there are people who would take it amiss.

15 May

The common people of the town already know and love me, the children in particular. Something sad has struck me. When at first I joined them and asked them friendly questions about this and that, some of them supposed I was out to mock them and gave me a distinctly uncouth reception. I did not let this trouble me unduly; yet I felt very strongly something that I have often noticed, that people of some standing always keep coldly aloof from the common folk, as if they believe they would lose if they approached them; and then there are irresponsible characters and nasty jokers who appear to condescend, but only to make the poor people feel their cockiness all the more.

I well know we are not equal, nor can be; but I maintain that he who supposes he must keep his distance from what they call the rabble, to preserve the respect due to him, is as much to blame as a coward who hides from his enemy for fear of being beaten.

Recently I went to the spring and came upon a young servant girl who had set down her pitcher on the bottom-most step and was looking round to see if some companion would come and help her lift it onto her head. I went down and looked at her.—‘May I assist the young maid?’ said I.—She blushed from top to toe.—‘Oh no, sir!’





said she.—‘No standing on ceremony,’ said I.—She set her headgear<sup>8</sup> straight, and I helped her. She thanked me and climbed the steps.

### 17 May

I have made all manner of acquaintance but have yet to meet with any society. I do not know what it is that attracts people to me; so many like me and attach themselves to me, and then it hurts me to find that we are travelling the same stretch for only a short way. If you ask how the people are here I have to answer: just as they are everywhere! The human race is a monotonous affair. Most people spend the greatest part of their time working in order to live, and what little freedom remains so fills them with fear that they seek out any and every means to be rid of it. What a thing our human destiny is!

But the folk are of a very fine kind! When at times I forget myself and, together with them, enjoy the pleasures that are still available to mankind, such as sitting round a crowded table joking in innocent, open-hearted warmth, or taking a ride or dancing when one feels like it, or such things, it has a very good effect on me; but then I must be certain not to think of those many other powers lying dormant in me, mouldering in disuse, which I must needs keep carefully concealed. Ah, it trammels the whole heart so.—And still! to be misunderstood is my fate.

Ah, that the friend of my youth<sup>9</sup> is dead! Ah, that I ever knew her!—I might say: You are a fool! You are looking for something that cannot be found on earth! And yet she was mine. I felt that heart, that great soul, in whose presence I seemed to be more than I was, because I was all that I could be. Great God! Was there any single power in my soul that lay unused? Was I not able to reveal to her all of the wonderful feeling with which my heart embraces Nature? When we were together, were we not forever weaving the finest of sensibility and the keenest of wit, all of whose manifestations, even when they went too far, were marked with the stamp of genius? And now!—Ah, she was years older than me, and went to her grave before me. Never shall I forget her, never her firm understanding and her divine tolerance.



Some days ago I met a certain young V., an honest youth with most pleasing features. He has but recently left the academies, and, while he does not consider himself wise, he none the less believes he knows more than others do. He was hardworking too, as I could tell from a number of things; in short, his knowledge is quite presentable. Since he had heard that I draw a good deal and know Greek (two outlandish things in these parts), he approached me and hauled forth a great deal of learning, from Batteux to Wood, from de Piles to Winckelmann, and assured me he had read the first part of Sulzer's theory right through and possessed a manuscript by Heyne concerning the study of antiquity.<sup>10</sup> This was all fine by me.


There is another worthy man I have now got to know, the manager<sup>11</sup> of the royal estate, an open man of good heart. They say it brings joy to the spirit to see him among his children, nine of them; his eldest daughter in particular is highly spoken of. He has invited me to his home, and I mean to visit him in the very near future. He lives in a royal hunting lodge an hour and a half from here, where he was given permission to move after the death of his wife, as he found it too painful to remain here in town, in the official residence.

One or two other bizarre characters have crossed my path too, and everything about them is unbearable, and most intolerable of all are their protestations of friendship.

Farewell!—This letter will be to your taste, it is full of factual accounts.

22 May

That the life of Man is but a dream has been sensed by many a one, and I too am never free of the feeling. When I consider the restrictions that are placed on the active, inquiring energies of Man; when I see that all our efforts have no other result than to satisfy needs which in turn serve no purpose but to prolong our wretched existence, and then see that all our reassurance concerning the particular questions we probe is no more than a dreamy resignation, since all we are doing is to paint our prison walls with colourful



figures and bright views—all of this, Wilhelm, leaves me silent. I withdraw into myself, and discover a world, albeit a notional world of dark desire rather than one of actuality and vital strength. And everything swims before my senses, and I go my way in the world wearing the smile of the dreamer.

All our learned teachers and educators are agreed that children do not know why they want what they want; but no one is willing to believe that adults too, like children, wander about this earth in a daze and, like children, do not know where they come from or where they are going, act as rarely as they do according to genuine motives, and are as thoroughly governed as they are by biscuits and cake and the rod. And yet it seems palpably clear to me.

I gladly confess, since I know the reply you would want to make, that they are the happiest who, like children, live for the present moment, drag their dolls around and dress and undress them, and watchfully steal by the drawer where Mama has locked away the cake, and, when at last they get their hands on what they want, devour it with their cheeks crammed full and cry, 'More!'—They are happy creatures. And those others, who give pompous titles to their beggarly pursuits and even to their passions, and chalk them up as vast enterprises for the good and well-being of mankind, they too are happy.—It is all very well for those who can be like that! But he who humbly perceives where it is all leading, who sees how prettily the happy man makes an Eden of his garden, and how even the unhappy man goes willingly on his weary way, panting beneath his burden, and that all are equally interested in seeing the light of the sun for one minute more—he indeed will be silent, and will create a world from within for himself, and be happy because he is a man. And then, confined as he may be, he none the less still preserves in his heart the sweet sensation of freedom, and the knowledge that he can quit this prison whenever he wishes.

### 26 May

You know of old my way of making myself a home, of pitching my humble shelter in some pleasant place and lodging there in the most



modest of manners. Here too I have once again been attracted to such a spot.

About an hour outside the town is a place they call Wahlheim.\*<sup>12</sup> It is most engagingly situated on a hill, and when you are up above and following the path out of the village you suddenly have a view across the entire valley. A kindly innkeeper, obliging and cheerful in her old age, has wine, beer and coffee to offer; and best of all are the two linden trees whose spreading boughs shade the little church square, which is surrounded by farmers' houses, barns and yards. It has not been easy to find so pleasant and cosy a spot; and now I have my little table and my chair carried out of the inn, and drink my coffee there, and read my Homer. The first time I walked beneath these lindens, by chance one beautiful afternoon, I found the square perfectly deserted. Everyone was out in the fields except a boy about four years old who was sitting on the ground and holding another child of perhaps six months that sat between his feet; he was holding it to his breast with both arms, so that he served as a kind of armchair; and, despite the vivacity that sparkled in his black eyes as he gazed around, he sat quite tranquilly. The sight delighted me: I sat down on a plough across from them, and took great pleasure in drawing this brotherly picture. I added the fence that was near them, a barn door and a few broken cart-wheels, all simply the way it was, and after an hour I found I had produced a harmoniously correct and arresting drawing without putting into it anything whatsoever of my own. This confirmed me in my resolve to keep to Nature alone in future. Only Nature has inexhaustible riches, and only Nature creates a great artist. A good deal can be said of the advantages of rules, much the same as can be said in praise of bourgeois society. A man shaped by the rules will never produce anything tasteless or bad, just as a citizen who observes laws and decorum will never be an unbearable neighbour or an out-and-out villain; and yet on the other hand, say what you please, the rules will destroy the true feeling of Nature and its true expression! You may say: 'You are too hard! The rules merely contain, they cut back the ranker growth, etc.'—My good friend, let me offer you an analogy. It is the same as it is with love. A young fellow is totally infatuated with a girl, spends every hour of the day

\* The reader need go to no lengths to locate the places mentioned here; it has been considered necessary to alter the actual names given in the original text.



with her, wears himself out and squanders his fortune to give her constant proof that his devotion to her knows no end. And then some philistine, some man of public rank, comes and says to him: 'My dear young sir! To love is only natural, but you must be true to human nature when you love! Divide up your hours, some for your work and some for recreation with your girl. Calculate your income and, once your necessities are seen to, I shall be the last to urge against giving her a present with what remains, though not too often: on her birthday, say, or her saint's day.' And so forth.—If the man obeys, he will turn out a respectable young chap, and I should personally advise any prince to appoint him to his council; but his love will be done for, and so, if he is an artist, will his art. Oh, my friends! You ask why the torrent of genius so rarely pours forth, so rarely floods and thunders and overwhelms your astonished soul?—Because, dear friends, on either bank dwell the cool, respectable gentlemen, whose summer-houses, tulip beds and cabbage patches would all be washed away, and who are therefore highly skilled in averting future dangers in good time, by damming and digging channels.

### 27 May

I see that I have fallen into raptures, parables and declamation, and in the process have forgotten to tell you the rest of the story concerning the children. I sat there on my plough for a good two hours, quite absorbed in those painter's sensations I told you of, in a highly piecemeal way, in yesterday's letter. Towards evening a young woman carrying a little basket approached the children, who had not made a move the whole time, and called from a distance: 'Philipps, you are a very good boy.'—She wished me good day, I thanked her, stood up and crossed closer, and asked if she was the mother of the children? She said she was, and, giving the eldest half a roll, picked up the little one and kissed him with motherly love.—'I gave Philipps the little one to look after,' she said, 'while I went into town with my eldest boy to buy white bread and sugar and an earthenware pot.'—I could see all of that in the basket, the cover of which had slipped off.—'I am going to cook some soup for Hans' (that was the name of the



youngest) 'this evening; this reckless chap, the big one, broke my pot yesterday when he and Philipps were squabbling over the pot-scrappings.'—I asked about the eldest, and she had scarcely told me that he was chasing some geese around the meadow but he came bounding up, bringing a hazel switch for the second oldest. I went on talking to the woman and gathered that she was the schoolmaster's daughter and that her husband was away on a journey to Switzerland to collect a cousin's inheritance.—'They tried to cheat him out of it,' she said, 'and did not reply to his letters, so he has gone himself. I only hope he has not had an accident. I have heard nothing from him.'—Reluctantly I took my leave of the woman, giving a kreutzer to each of the children and her one for the youngest too, so that she could buy it a roll to go with the soup when next she went to town; and so we parted.

I tell you, my precious friend, whenever my mind is tottering all the tumult is soothed to quiet by the sight of a creature like this, living in the small daily round of her existence in a state of happy tranquillity, getting by from one day to the next, seeing the leaves fall and thinking nothing but that winter is coming.

Since then I have often been out there. The children have grown quite used to me, they get sugar when I drink my coffee and in the evenings they share my sandwiches and soured milk. On Sundays they never lack for a kreutzer, and, if I am not there after vespers, the inn-woman has instructions to pay it out.

They are on intimate terms with me, tell me all manner of things, and I take particular delight in their passions and simple cravings, once a number of the village children are together.

I have been at great pains to disabuse their mother of her concern that they might be inconveniencing the gentleman.

### 30 May

What I told you recently concerning painting is doubtless also true of poetry: what counts is that one perceives excellence and dares to give it expression, which sounds little but is in fact a great deal. Today I witnessed a scene which, if written down plainly and exactly, would



be the loveliest idyll the world has ever seen; but why trouble with poetry and scenes and idylls? Must we go tinkering about with Nature before we can enjoy it?

If you are expecting a lot of loftiness and elegance after this introduction, you have been sorely deceived once again; it is merely a farmer lad that has prompted such lively interest. As usual I shall tell it poorly, and I suppose that you, as usual, will consider I exaggerate; and again it is Wahlheim, always Wahlheim, that supplies these curiosities.

A party was outside under the lindens, taking coffee. Since they were not the fittest of company, I made an excuse and stayed away.

A farmer lad came out of one of the neighbouring houses and busied himself making some repair to the plough I had recently drawn. I liked his way, so I spoke to him and asked after his circumstances, and presently we were acquainted and soon, as generally happens to me with this kind of person, intimate. He told me that he was in service with a widow, and very well cared for by her. He spoke of her so much, and praised her so highly, that I soon realized he was devoted to her body and soul. She was no longer young, he said, and had been badly treated by her first husband, so that she did not want to remarry; and from his account it was so apparent that he found her beautiful and charming, and ardently wished she might choose him to erase the memory of her first husband's errors, that I should have to repeat his every word to convey this man's pure affection, his love, his devotion. Indeed, I should need the gifts of the greatest of poets if I were also to describe his expressive gestures, the harmony of his voice and the secret fire in his eyes, to any effect. No, there are no words for the tenderness that was in his entire being, his every expression; everything I could say would only be crude. I was particularly touched by his fear lest I think his relationship to his mistress a dishonourable one or doubt the propriety of her conduct. How delightful it was when he spoke of her figure, her person, which, without the graces of youth, attracted him powerfully and won him: all I can do is re-live it in my inmost soul. Never in my life have I witnessed (or, I might add, even conceived or dreamt of) intense desire and burning, ardent longing of such purity. Bear with me when I tell you that when I recall this innocence and truth my very soul is afire, and that the image of his devotion and



tenderness follows me wherever I go, and that, as if kindled by it myself, I am all longing and languishing.

I shall now try to see her too as soon as possible, or rather, on second thoughts, I shall avoid doing so. It is better for me to see her with the eyes of her lover; perhaps she would not appear to my own eyes as she does now, and why should I ruin the beautiful image I have?

### 16 June

Why I have not written to you?—You, who are a learned man too, ask a question like that. You might guess that things are well with me, and indeed—In a word, I have made an acquaintance who has touched my heart very closely. I have—I know not what.

I shall scarcely be able to tell you how I grew acquainted with one of the most lovable of creatures. I am in good spirits, and happy, and therefore not the best of storytellers.

An angel!—Rot!—Every man says that about his beloved, does he not? And yet I am unable to tell you how, and why, she is perfection itself; suffice to say that she has captivated me utterly.

So much simplicity with so much understanding, so much goodness and so much resolve, and tranquillity of soul together with true life and vitality.—

Everything I am telling you about her is fearful twaddle, tiresome abstractions that do not express a single trait of her being. Some other time—no, not another time, I shall tell it you right now. If I don't do so now I never will. For, between ourselves, since I started writing I have already been three times on the point of laying down my pen, having my horse saddled and riding out. And yet I vowed this morning that I would not go riding, and none the less I go to the window every moment or so to see how high the sun still is.—

I couldn't resist it. I had to go to see her. Here I am again, Wilhelm, about to eat my supper and write to you. What joy it is for my soul, to see her amidst those dear, cheerful children, her eight brothers and sisters!—

If I go on like this you will know as much when I am through as you



did at the start. So lend an ear and I shall force myself to give you the details.

Recently I wrote that I had become acquainted with S., the estate officer, who invited me to visit him soon at his retreat, or rather in his little kingdom. I neglected to do so, and perhaps would never have gone if chance had not revealed to me the treasure that lies concealed in those peaceful parts.

The young people here had arranged a ball out in the country,<sup>13</sup> and I gladly agreed to be one of the party. I asked one of the local girls, a good, pretty and otherwise insignificant girl, to be my companion; and we planned that I should take a carriage and drive out to the scene of the festivities with my dancing partner and her aunt, picking up Charlotte S.<sup>14</sup> on the way.—‘You will be getting to know a beautiful young woman,’ my companion informed me as we drove through the vast wooded park to the hunting lodge.—‘Be on your guard,’ put in the aunt, ‘and take care not to fall in love!’—‘Why?’ I asked.—‘She is already promised to a very worthy man,’ she replied, ‘who has gone away to put his affairs in order following the death of his father, and to see about a decent position.’—This information left me pretty much indifferent.

The sun was still a quarter hour from touching the mountains as we drove up at the gate of the courtyard. It was very sultry, and the ladies voiced fears of the thunderstorm that appeared to be approaching on the horizon, where dank whitish-grey clouds were gathering. I set their minds at rest by affecting expertise in matters of the weather, though all the time I was myself beginning to suspect that our pleasures would be dealt a blow.

I had got down, and the maid who came to the gate asked for a moment’s indulgence, and said Mamsell’ Lottchen would be with us right away. I crossed the courtyard to a well-built house and, climbing the flight of steps in front, opened the door and beheld the most charming scene I have ever set eyes on. In the hallway, six children aged between eleven and two were milling about a girl with a wonderful figure and of medium height, wearing a simple white dress with pink ribbons at the sleeves and breast. She was holding a loaf of rye bread and cutting a piece for each of the little ones about her, according to their age and appetite;<sup>15</sup> she handed out the slices with great kindness, and the children reached up their little hands long