

514.04
E 601

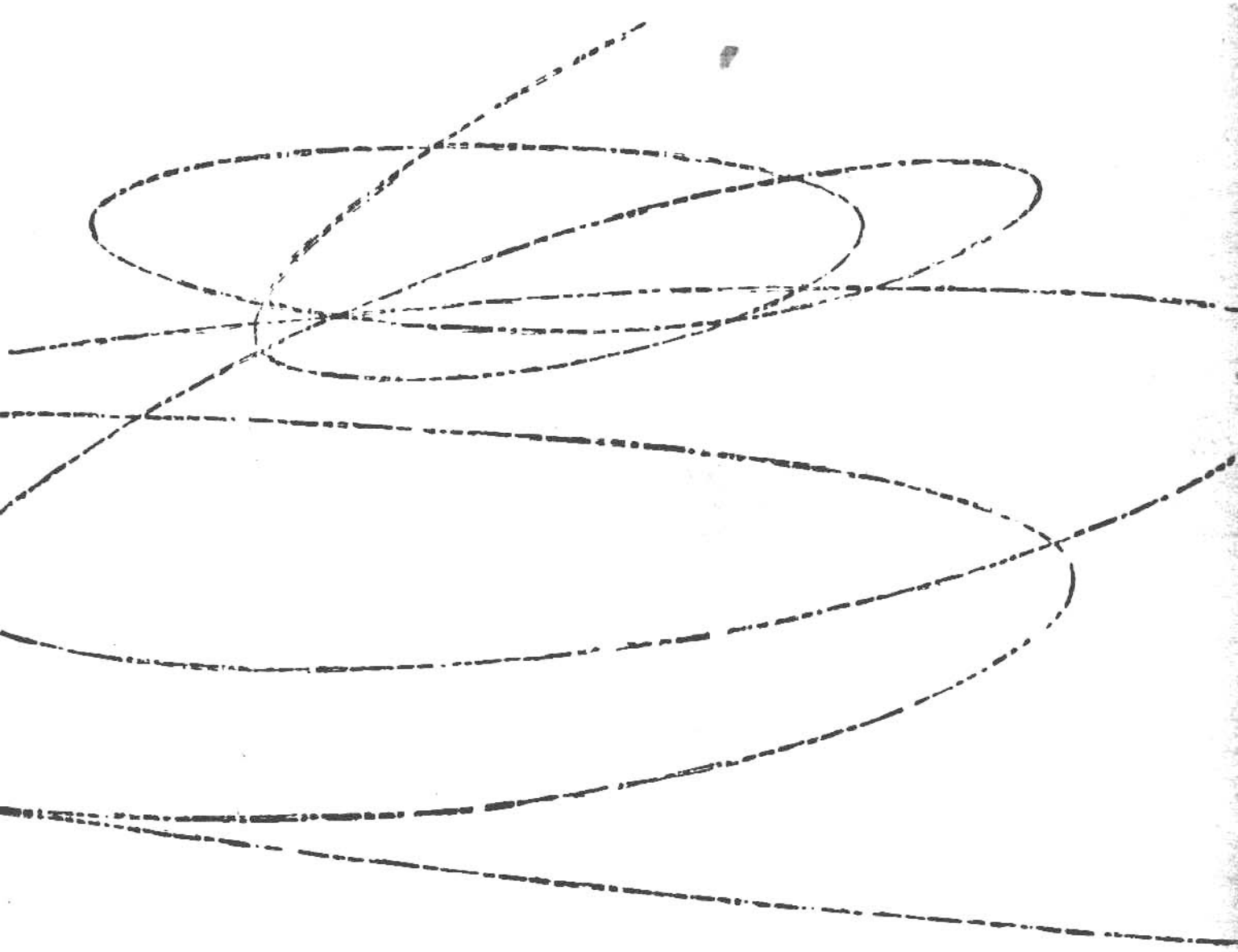
7997527 R.



FRANZ KAFKA

THE CASTLE

Definitive Edition



THE MODERN LIBRARY · NEW YORK



MODERN LIBRARY EDITION, *February 1969*

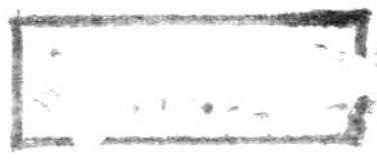
Copyright 1930, 1941, 1954, by Alfred A. Knopf, Inc.
Copyright renewed © 1958 by Alfred A. Knopf, Inc.

All rights reserved under International and Pan-American Copyright Conventions. Published in the United States by Random House, Inc., New York and simultaneously in Canada by Random House of Canada Limited, Toronto. By arrangement with: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc.

Published in German as *Das Schloss* by Kurt Wolff Verlag, Munich, 1926, by Schocken Verlag, Berlin, 1935, and by Schocken Books Inc., New York, 1946

MANUFACTURED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

151404
E 601



7997527

R

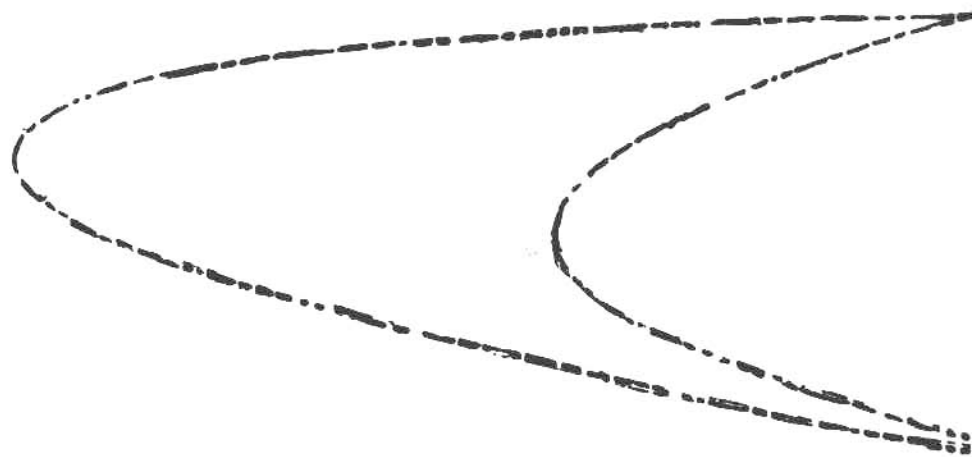
THE CASTLE

黃振輝先生惠贈

1367887

*Translated from the German by Willa and Edwin Muir
with additional materials translated by
Eithne Wilkins and Ernst Kaiser*

with an Homage by THOMAS MANN



PUBLISHER'S NOTE

"FRANZ KAFKA's name, so far as I can discover, is almost unknown to English readers. As he is considered by several of the best German critics to have been perhaps the most interesting writer of his generation, and as he is in some ways a strange and disconcerting genius, it has been suggested that a short introductory note should be provided for this book, the first of his to be translated into English."

This is the first paragraph of Edwin Muir's Introductory Note published in 1930 with the first American edition of The Castle (in his and Willa Muir's translation) and reprinted in all later editions. Hardly ever has the work of translators been so amply rewarded—and indeed on so large a scale of literary fame for the translated work that the quoted paragraph now reads like a historical curiosity. In the time between the first publication of The Castle and the present definitive edition, Franz Kafka, though still a "strange and disconcerting genius," has risen to the stature of a classic of modern literature. Merely to list the critical literature his work has evoked would probably mean compiling a book. In this situation, which in itself is the greatest tribute to the work of Franz Kafka's devoted friend and editor, Max Brod, and to his first English translators, the publisher has felt that the reader no longer requires the help offered to him by the Introductory Note and Editor's Additional Note of the previous editions—the less so as, quite

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

apart from much other literature on the subject, Max Brod's biography of Franz Kafka has in the meantime become available in English translation.

As *The Castle* remains unfinished, however, the following paragraph from the Editor's Note to the first American edition should be preserved: "Kafka never wrote his concluding chapter. But he told me about it once when I asked him how the novel was to end. The ostensible Land-Surveyor was to find partial satisfaction at least. He was not to relax in his struggle, but was to die worn out by it. Round his death-bed the villagers were to assemble, and from the Castle itself the word was to come that though K.'s legal claim to live in the village was not valid, yet, taking certain auxiliary circumstances into account, he was to be permitted to live and work there." It is also not unimportant to know "that *The Castle* seems to have been begun as a story in the first person, the earlier chapters being altered by the author, 'K.' being inserted everywhere in the place of 'I,' and the later chapters written straight out in the third person."

In his postscript to the third German edition Max Brod gratefully acknowledges the editorial assistance of Heinz Pollitzer.

The present English edition is based on the definitive German edition of *Das Schloss* (New York: Schocken Books; 1951). Thus it is considerably larger than the previous editions, which followed the text of the first German publication of the novel. The additions—results of Max Brod's later editing of Franz Kafka's posthumous writings—are: the concluding section of Chapter xviii, the whole of Chapters xix and xx, and the Appendix, consisting of variations, fragments, and, above all, of many passages struck through

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

and thus deleted by the author, but deemed sufficiently interesting by the editor to be made accessible after all.

The publisher is deeply grateful to Professor Erich Heller for editorial advice concerning this new edition in English.

As the original translators of the novel were unable to undertake the translation of the new material, Eithne Wilkins and Ernst Kaiser kindly agreed to complete the work begun by Willa and Edwin Muir. In line with certain emendations suggested by the new translators—and for the purpose of making the English text uniform throughout—a few small changes have been made in the previously existing English text. Examples are the use of "Village Council" to replace "Town Council," of "Mayor" to replace "Superintendent," and of "applicants" to replace "clients."

HOMAGE

FRANZ KAFKA, author of this very remarkable and brilliant novel, *The Castle*, and of its equally extraordinary companion-piece, *The Trial*, was born in 1883 in Prague, son of a German-Jewish-Bohemian family, and died of consumption in 1924, at the early age of forty-one. His last portrait, done shortly before his death, looks more like a man of twenty-five than of forty-one. It shows a shy, sensitive, contemplative face, with black curly hair growing low on the forehead, large dark eyes, at once dreamy and penetrating, a straight, drooping nose, cheeks shadowed by illness, and a mouth with unusually fine lines and a half-smile playing in one corner. The expression, at once childlike and wise, recalls not a little the best-known portrait of Friedrich von Hardenberg, called Novalis, the seraphic mystic and seeker after the "blue flower." Novalis too died of consumption.

But though his gaze makes us conceive of him as a Novalis from the east of Europe, yet I should not care to dub Kafka either a romantic, an ecstatic, or a mystic. For a romantic he is too clear-cut, too realistic, too well attached to life and to a simple, native effectiveness in living. His sense of humor—of an involved kind peculiar to himself—is too pronounced for an ecstatic. And as for mysticism: he did indeed once say, in a conversation with Rudolf Steiner, that his own work had given him understanding of certain "clairvoyant states" described by the latter. And he compared his own work with "a new secret doctrine, a cabbala." But there is

lacking to it the hot and heavy atmosphere of transcendentalism; the sensual does not pass over into the super-sensual, there is no "voluptuous hell," no "bridal bed of the tomb," nor the rest of the stock-in-trade of the genuine mystic. None of that was in his line; neither Wagner's *Tristan* nor Novalis's *Hymns to the Night* nor his love for his dead Sophie would have appealed to Kafka. He was a dreamer, and his compositions are often dreamlike in conception and form; they are as oppressive, illogical, and absurd as dreams, those strange shadow-pictures of actual life. But they are full of a reasoned morality, an ironic, satiric, desperately reasoned morality, struggling with all its might toward justice, goodness, and the will of God. All that mirrors itself in his style: a conscientious, curiously explicit, objective, clear, and correct style, which in its precise, almost official conservatism is reminiscent of Adalbert Stifter's. Yes, he was a dreamer; but in his dreaming he did not yearn after a "blue flower" blossoming somewhere in a mystical sphere; he yearned after the "blisses of the commonplace."

The phrase comes from a youthful story by the writer of these lines, *Tonio Kröger*. That story, as I learn from his friend, compatriot, and best critic, Max Brod, was a favorite with Kafka. His was a different world, but he, the Jew of eastern Europe, had a very precise idea of the art and feeling of bourgeois Europe. One might put it that the "aspiring effort" which brought to birth a book like *The Castle* corresponded in the religious sphere to Tonio Kröger's artist isolation, his longing for simple human feeling, his bad conscience in respect of the bourgeois, and his love of the blond and good and ordinary. Perhaps I shall best characterize Kafka as a writer by calling him a religious humorist.

The combination sounds offensive; and both parts of it stand in need of explanation. Brod relates that Kafka had always been deeply impressed by an anecdote from Gustave Flaubert's later years. The famous æsthete, who in an ascetic paroxysm sacrificed all life to his nihilistic idol, "*littérature*," once paid a visit with his niece, Mme Commanville, to a family of her acquaintance, a sturdy and happy wedded pair surrounded by a flock of charming children. On the way home the author of the *Tentations de Saint Antoine* was very thoughtful. Walking with Mme Commanville along the Seine, he kept coming back to the natural, healthy, jolly, upright life he had just had a glimpse of. "*Ils sont dans le vrai!*" he kept repeating. This phrase, this complete abandonment of his whole position, from the lips of the master whose creed had been the denial of life for the sake of art—this phrase had been Kafka's favorite quotation.

D'être dans le vrai—to live in the true and the right—meant to Kafka to be near to God, to live in God, to live aright and after God's will—and he felt very remote from this security in God and the will of God. That "literary work was my one desire, my single calling"—that he knew very soon, and that might pass, as being itself probably the will of God. "But," he writes in 1914, a man of thirty-one, "the wish to portray my own inner life has shoved everything else into the background; everything else is stunted, and continues to be stunted." "Often," he adds at another time, "I am seized by a melancholy though quite tranquil amazement at my own lack of feeling . . . that simply by consequence of my fixation upon letters I am everywhere else uninterested and in consequence heartless." This calm and melancholy perception is actually, however, a source of

much disquiet, and the disquiet is religious in its nature. This being dehumanized, being "stunted" by the passion for art, is certainly remote from God; it is the opposite of "living in the true and the right." It is possible, of course, to take in a symbolic sense this passion which makes everything else a matter of indifference. It may be thought of as an ethical symbol. Art is not inevitably what it was to Flaubert, the product, the purpose, and the significance of a frantically ascetic denial of life. It may be an ethical expression of life itself; wherein not the work but the life itself is the main thing. Then life is not "heartless," not a mere means of achieving by struggle a goal of æsthetic perfection; instead the product, the work, is an ethical symbol; and the goal is not some sort of objective perfection, but the subjective consciousness that one has done one's best to give meaning to life and to fill it with achievement worthy to stand beside any other kind of human accomplishment.

"For a few days," Kafka says, "I have been writing. May it go on! My life has some justification. Once more I am able to converse with myself, and not gaze into utter vacancy. Only in this way can I hope to find improvement." He might almost have said "salvation" instead of improvement. It would have made still clearer the religious nature of the tranquillity he felt when he worked. Art as the functioning of faculties bestowed by God, as work faithfully done—that is an interpretation not only in an intellectual but in a moral sense: as it heightens the actual into the true, it lends meaning and justification to life, not only subjectively but also humanly; thus the work becomes humanly conservative, as a means of living "in the right"—or at least of coming closer to it—and art thus becomes adaptable to

life. Franz Kafka, late and doubting and almost desperately complicated representative of German letters, certainly felt the purest respect and reverence for Goethe; and from Goethe we have the great saying: "Man can find no better retreat from the world than art, and man can find no stronger link with the world than art." A wonderful saying. Solitude and companionship—the two are here reconciled in a way that Kafka may well have admired, without being quite willing or able to admit it, because his productivity depended on the strife within him, and on his feeling of being "remote from God," his insecurity. His joy and gratitude when he was able to write might have taught him that art "links" us not only with the world, but also with the moral sphere, with the right and the divine. And this in a double sense, by the profound symbolism inherent in the idea of the "good." What the artist calls good, the object of all his playful pains, his life-and-death jesting, is nothing less than a parable of the right and the good, a representation of all human striving after perfection. In this sense Kafka's work, born of his dreams, is very good indeed. It is composed with a fidelity and patience, a native exactitude, a conscientiousness—ironic, even parodistic in kind, yet charming to laughter—with a painstaking love, all proof that he was no unbeliever, but in some involved fashion of his own had faith in the good and the right. And the discrepancy between God and man, the incapacity of man to recognize the good, to unite himself with it and "live in the right," Kafka took this for the theme of his works, works that in every sentence bear witness to a humorously, fantastically despairing good will.

They express the solitude, the aloneness, of the artist—and of the Jew, on top of that—among the genuine native-born

of life, the villagers who settle at the foot of the "Castle." They express the inborn, self-distrustful solitariness that fights for order and regularity, civic rights, an established calling, marriage—in short, for all the "blisses of the commonplace." They express an unbounded will, forever suffering shipwreck, to live aright. *The Castle* is through and through an autobiographical novel. The hero, who should originally speak in the first person, is called K.; he is the author, who has only too literally suffered all these pains and these grotesque disappointments. In the story of his life there is a betrothal that is simply the essence of all melancholy miscarriages. And in *The Castle* a prominent part is played by similar spasmodic efforts to found a family and arrive closer to God through leading a normal life.

For it is plain that regular life in a community, the ceaseless struggle to become a "native," is simply the technique for improving K.'s relations with the "Castle," or rather to set up relations with it: to attain nearer, in other words, to God and to a state of grace. In the sardonic dream-symbolism of the novel the village represents life, the soil, the community, healthy normal existence, and the blessings of human and bourgeois society. The Castle, on the other hand, represents the divine dispensation, the state of grace—puzzling, remote, incomprehensible. And never has the divine, the superhuman, been observed, experienced, characterized with stranger, more daring, more comic expedients, with more inexhaustible psychological riches, both sacrilegious and devout, than in this story of an incorrigible believer, so needing grace, so wrestling for it, so passionately and recklessly yearning after it that he even tries to encompass it by stratagems and wiles.

The question is really an important one, in its own touching, funny, involved religious way: whether K. has actually been summoned by the estates authorities to act as surveyor, or whether he only imagines or pretends to others that such is the case, in order to get into the community and attain to the state of grace. It remains throughout the narrative an open question. In the first chapter there is a telephone conversation with "up above"; the idea that he has been summoned is summarily denied, so that he is exposed as a vagabond and swindler; then comes a correction, whereby his surveyorship is vaguely recognized up above—though he himself has the feeling that the confirmation is only the result of "lofty superiority" and of the intention of "taking up the challenge with a smile."

More impressive still is the second telephone conversation in the second chapter; K. himself holds it with the Castle, and with him are his two aides, who possess all the fantastic absurdity of characters in dreams: whom the Castle sent to him, and in whom he sees his "old assistants." And when you have read this, and listened with K. to "the hum of countless children's voices" from the receiver, the rebuff given by the official up above, with the "small defect" in his speech, to the suppliant down below at the inn telephone, with his persistent appeals and tergiversations, you will not lay down this long, circumstantial, incredible book until you have run through and lived through the whole of it; until amid laughter and the discomfort of its dream-atmosphere you have got to the bottom of those existences up there, the heavenly authorities, and their overbearing, arbitrary, puzzling, anomalous, and entirely incomprehensible activities.

You get the best objective idea of them in the fifth chap-

ter, from the mouth of the "Mayor"; likewise some explanation of the odd things that happen when one tries to telephone the Castle and finds out that the connection is entirely unreliable and illusory; that there is no central exchange to connect the call; that one can get a branch connection, only to discover either that the receivers have been left off or that such answers as one gets are entirely nonsensical and frivolous. I refer particularly to the amazing conversation between K. and the Mayor; but indeed the book is inexhaustible in its devices to explain and illustrate its central theme: the grotesque unconnection between the human being and the transcendental; the incommensurability of the divine, the strange, uncanny, demonic illogicality, the "ungetatable" remoteness, cruelty, yes, wickedness, by any human standards, of the "Castle"; in other words, of the powers above. In every shade and tone, with employment of every possible device, the theme is played upon. It is the most patient, obstinate, desperate "wrestling with the angel" that ever happened; and the strangest, boldest, most novel thing about it is that it is done with *humor*, in a spirit of reverent satire which leaves utterly unchallenged the *fact* of the divine Absolute. This is what makes Kafka a religious humorist: that he does not, as literature is prone to do, treat of the incomprehensible, the incommensurable, the humanly unassessable transcendent world in a style either grandiose, ecstatic, or hyper-emotional. No, he sees and depicts it as Austrian "department"; as a magnification of a petty, obstinate, inaccessible, unaccountable bureaucracy; a mammoth establishment of documents and procedures, headed by some darkly responsible official hierarchy. Sees it, then, as I have said, with the eye of a satirist; yet at the same time with

H O M A G E

utter sincerity, faith, and submissiveness, wrestling unintermittedly to win inside the incomprehensible kingdom of grace, while employing satire instead of pathos as his technique.

The biography tells us that Kafka once read aloud to some friends the beginning of his novel *The Trial*, which deals explicitly with the problem of divine justice. His listeners laughed through their tears, and Kafka too had to laugh so hard that his reading was interrupted. Mirth of that kind is very deep-seated and involved; no doubt the same thing happened when he read *The Castle* aloud. But when you consider that laughter of such a sort, with such deep and lofty sources, is probably the best thing that remains to us, then you will be inclined, with me, to place Kafka's warm-hearted fantasies among the best worth reading in the world's treasury of literature.

The Castle is not quite complete; but probably not more than one chapter is missing. The author gave his friends a version of the ending by word of mouth. K. dies—dies out of sheer exhaustion after his desperate efforts to get in touch with the Castle and be confirmed in his appointment. The villagers stand about the stranger's deathbed—when, at the very last moment, an order comes down from the Castle: to the effect that while K. has no legal claim to live in the community, yet the permission is nevertheless granted; not in consideration of his honest efforts, but owing to “certain auxiliary circumstances,” it is permitted to him to settle in the village and work there. So, at the last, grace is vouchsafed. Franz Kafka too, certainly, without bitterness, laid it to his heart when he died.

THOMAS MANN

Princeton, June 1940