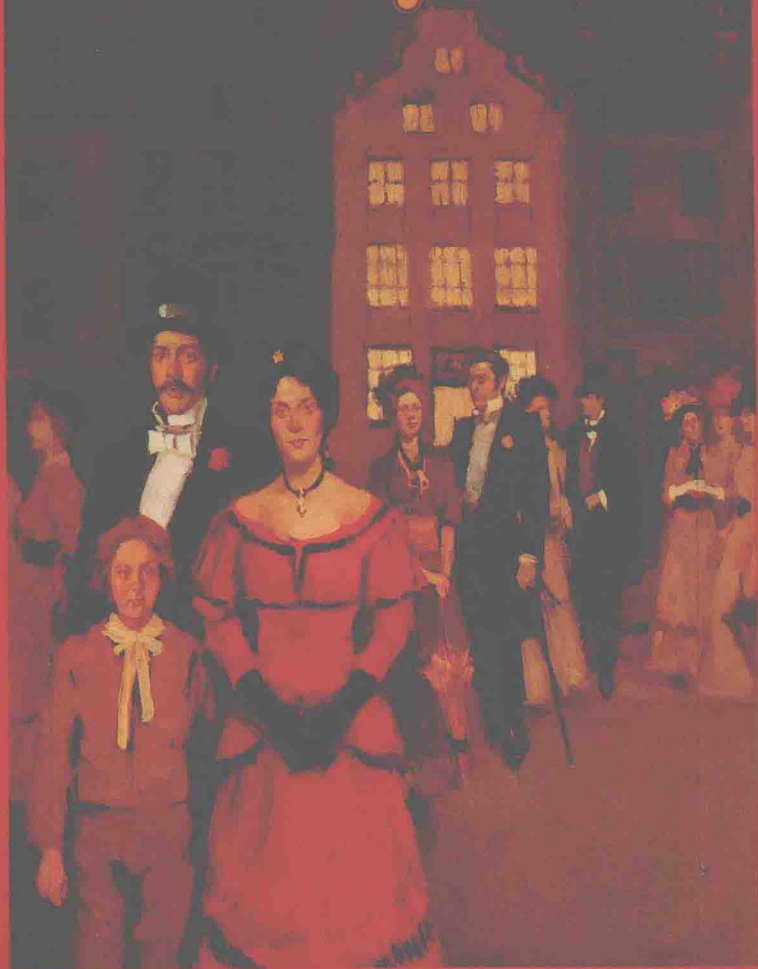


Buddenbrooks



THOMAS MANN

A Special Public Television Presentation on *Great Performances*

Thomas Mann

BUDDENBROOKS

Translated from the German by

H. T. LOWE-PORTER



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TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

Buddenbrooks was written before the turn of the century; it was first published in 1902, and became a German classic. It is one of those novels — we possess many of them in English — which are at once a work of art and the unique record of a period and a district. *Buddenbrooks* is great in its psychology, great as the monument of a vanished cultural tradition, and ultimately great by the perfection of its art: the classic purity and beautiful austerity of its style.

The translation of a book which is a triumph of style in its own language, is always a piece of effrontery. *Buddenbrooks* is so leisurely, so chiselled: the great gulf of the war divides its literary method from that of our time. Besides, the author has recorded much dialect. This difficulty is insuperable. Dialect cannot be transferred.

So the present translation is offered with humility. It was necessary to recognize that the difficulties were great. Yet it was necessary to set oneself the bold task of transferring the spirit first and the letter so far as might be; and above all, to make certain that the work of art, coming as it does to the ear, in German, like music out of the past, should, in English, at least *not* come like a translation — which is, “God bless us, a thing of naught.”

H. T. LOWE-PORTER

PART ONE



CHAPTER I

“AND — and — what comes next?”

“Oh, yes, yes, what the dickens does come next? *C'est la question, ma très chère demoiselle!*”

Frau Consul Buddenbrook shot a glance at her husband and came to the rescue of her little daughter. She sat with her mother-in-law on a straight white-enamelled sofa with yellow cushions and a gilded lion's head at the top. The Consul was in his easy-chair beside her, and the child perched on her grandfather's knee in the window.

“Tony,” prompted the Frau Consul, “‘I believe that God’ —”

Dainty little eight-year-old Antonie, in her light shot-silk frock, turned her head away from her grandfather and stared aimlessly about the room with her blue-grey eyes, trying hard to remember. Once more she repeated “What comes next?” and went on slowly: “‘I believe that God’ —” and then, her face brightening, briskly finished the sentence: “‘created me, together with all living creatures.’” She was in smooth waters now, and rattled away, beaming with joy, through the whole Article, reproducing it word for word from the Catechism just promulgated, with the approval of an omniscient Senate, in that very year of grace 1835. When you were once fairly started, she thought, it was very like going down “Mount Jerusalem” with your brothers on the little sled: you had no time to think, and you couldn't stop even if you wanted to.

“‘And clothes and shoes,’” she said, “‘meat and drink, hearth and home, wife and child, acre and cow . . .’” But old Johann Buddenbrook could hold in no longer. He burst out laughing, in a high, half-smothered titter, in his glee at being able to make fun of the Catechism. He had probably put the child through this little examination with no other end in view. He inquired after Tony's acre and cow, asked how much she wanted for a sack of wheat, and tried to drive a bargain with her.

His round, rosy, benevolent face, which never would look cross no matter how hard he tried, was set in a frame of snow-white pow-

dered hair, and the suggestion of a pigtail fell over the broad collar of his mouse-coloured coat. His double chin rested comfortably on a white lace frill. He still, in his seventies, adhered to the fashions of his youth: only the lace frogs and the big pockets were missing. And never in all his life had he worn a pair of trousers.

They had all joined in his laughter, but largely as a mark of respect for the head of the family. Madame Antoinette Buddenbrook, born Duchamps, tittered in precisely the same way as her husband. She was a stout lady, with thick white curls over her ears, dressed in a plain gown of striped black and grey stuff which betrayed the native quiet simplicity of her character. Her hands were still white and lovely, and she held a little velvet work-bag on her lap. It was strange to see how she had grown, in time, to look like her husband. Only her dark eyes, by their shape and their liveliness, suggested her half-Latin origin. On her grandfather's side Madame Buddenbrook was of French-Swiss stock, though born in Hamburg.

Her daughter-in-law, Frau Consul Elizabeth Buddenbrook, born Kröger, laughed the sputtering Kröger laugh and tucked in her chin as the Krögers did. She could not be called a beauty, but, like all the Krögers, she looked distinguished; she moved with graceful deliberation and had a clear, well-modulated voice. People liked her and felt confidence in her. Her reddish hair curled over her ears and was piled in a crown on top of her head; and she had the brilliant white complexion that goes with such hair, set off with a tiny freckle here and there. Her nose was rather too long, her mouth somewhat small; her most striking facial peculiarity was the shape of her lower lip, which ran straight into the chin without a curve. She had on a short bodice with high puffed sleeves, that left exposed a flawlessly modelled neck adorned with a spray of diamonds on a satin ribbon.

The Consul was leaning forward in his easy-chair, rather fidgety. He wore a cinnamon-coloured coat with wide lapels and leg-of-mutton sleeves close-fitting at the wrists, and white linen trousers with black stripes up the outside seams. His chin nestled in a stiff choker collar, around which was folded a silk cravat that flowed down amply over his flowered waistcoat.

He had his father's deep-set blue observant eyes, though their expression was perhaps more dreamy; but his features were clearer-cut and more serious, his nose was prominent and aquiline, and his cheeks, half-covered with a fair curling beard, were not so plump as the old man's.

Madame Buddenbrook put her hand on her daughter-in-law's

arm and looked down at her lap with a giggle. "Oh, *mon vieux* — he's always the same, isn't he, Betsy?"

The Consul's wife only made a motion with her delicate hand, so that her gold bangles tinkled slightly. Then, with a gesture habitual to her, she drew her finger across her face from the corner of her mouth to her forehead, as if she were smoothing back a stray hair.

But the Consul said, half-smiling, yet with mild reproach: "There you go again, Father, making fun of sacred things."

They were sitting in the "landscape-room" on the first floor of the rambling old house in Meng Street, which the firm of Johann Buddenbrook had acquired some time since, though the family had not lived in it long. The room was hung with heavy resilient tapestries put up in such a way that they stood well out from the walls. They were woven in soft tones to harmonize with the carpet, and they depicted idyllic landscapes in the style of the eighteenth century, with merry vine-dressers, busy husbandmen, and gaily beribboned shepherdesses who sat beside crystal streams with spotless lambs in their laps or exchanged kisses with amorous shepherds. These scenes were usually lighted by a pale yellow sunset to match the yellow coverings on the white enamelled furniture and the yellow silk curtains at the two windows.

For the size of the room, the furniture was rather scant. A round table, its slender legs decorated with fine lines of gilding, stood, not in front of the sofa, but by the wall opposite the little harmonium, on which lay a flute-case; some stiff arm-chairs were ranged in a row round the walls; there was a sewing-table by the window, and a flimsy ornamental writing-desk laden with knick-knacks.

On the other side of the room from the windows was a glass door, through which one looked into the semi-darkness of a pillared hall; and on the left were the lofty white folding doors that led to the dining-room. A semi-circular niche in the remaining wall was occupied by the stove, which crackled away behind a polished wrought-iron screen.

For cold weather had set in early. The leaves of the little lime-trees around the churchyard of St. Mary's, across the way, had turned yellow, though it was but mid-October. The wind whistled around the corners of the massive Gothic pile, and a cold, thin rain was falling. On Madame Buddenbrook's account, the double windows had already been put in.

It was Thursday, the day on which all the members of the family living in town assembled every second week, by established

custom. To-day, however, a few intimate friends as well had been bidden to a family dinner; and now, towards four o'clock in the afternoon, the Buddenbrooks sat in the gathering twilight and awaited their guests.

Little Antonie had not let her grandfather interfere with her toboggan-ride. She merely pouted, sticking out her already prominent upper lip still further over the lower one. She was at the bottom of her Mount Jerusalem, but not knowing how to stop herself, she shot over the mark. "Amen," she said. "I know something, Grandfather."

"*Tiens!*" cried the old gentleman. "She knows something!" He made as if he were itching all over with curiosity. "Did you hear, Mamma? She knows something. Can any one tell me — ?"

"If the lightning," uttered Tony, nodding her head with every word, "sets something on fire, then it's the lightning that strikes. If it doesn't, why, then it's the thunder!" She folded her arms and looked around her like one sure of applause. But old Buddenbrook was annoyed by this display of wisdom. He demanded to know who had taught her such nonsense. It turned out that the culprit was the nursery governess, Ida Jungmann, who had lately been engaged from Marienwerder. The Consul had to come to her defence.

"You are too strict, Papa. Why shouldn't the child have her own little ideas about such things, at her age?"

"*Excusez, mon cher! . . . Mais c'est une folie!* You know I don't like the children's heads muddled with such things. 'The thunder strikes,' does it? Oh, very well, let it strike, and get along with your Prussian woman!"

The truth was, the old gentleman hadn't a good word to say for Ida Jungmann. Not that he was narrow-minded. He had seen something of the world, having travelled by coach to Southern Germany in 1813 to buy up wheat for the Prussian army; he had been to Amsterdam and Paris, and was too enlightened to condemn everything that lay beyond the gabled roofs of his native town. But in social intercourse he was more apt than his son to draw the line rigidly and give the cold shoulder to strangers. So when this young girl — she was then only twenty — had come back with his children from a visit to Western Prussia, as a sort of charity-child, the old man had made his son a scene for the act of piety, in which he spoke hardly anything but French and low German. Ida was the daughter of an inn-keeper who had died just before the Buddenbrooks' arrival in Marienwerder. She had proved to be capable in the household and with the children, and

her rigid honesty and Prussian notions of caste made her perfectly suited to her position in the family. She was a person of aristocratic principles, drawing hair-line distinctions between class and class, and very proud of her position as servant of the higher orders. She objected to Tony's making friends with any schoolmate whom she reckoned as belonging only to the respectable middle class.

And now the Prussian woman herself came from the pillared hall through the glass door — a fairly tall, big-boned girl in a black frock, with smooth hair and an honest face. She held by the hand an extraordinarily thin small child, dressed in a flowered print frock, with lustreless ash-coloured hair and the manner of a little old maid. This was Clothilde, the daughter of a nephew of old Buddenbrook who belonged to a penniless branch of the family and was in business at Rostock as an estates agent. Clothilde was being brought up with Antonie, being about the same age and a docile little creature.

"Everything is ready," Mamsell Jungmann said. She had had a hard time learning to pronounce her *r*'s, so now she rolled them tremendously in her throat. "Clothilde helped very well in the kitchen, so there was not much for cook to do."

Monsieur Buddenbrook sneered behind his lace frill at Ida's accent. The Consul patted his little niece's cheek and said: "That's right, Tilda. Work and pray. Tony ought to take a pattern from you; she's far too likely to be saucy and idle."

Tony dropped her head and looked at her grandfather from under her eyebrows. She knew he would defend her — he always did.

"No, no," he said, "hold your head up, Tony. Don't let them frighten you. We can't all be alike. Each according to his lights. Tilda is a good girl — but we're not so bad, either. Hey, Betsy?"

He turned to his daughter-in-law, who generally deferred to his views. Madame Antoinette, probably more from shrewdness than conviction, sided with the Consul; and thus the older and the younger generation crossed hands in the dance of life.

"You are very kind, Papa," the Consul's wife said. "Tony will try her best to grow up a clever and industrious woman. . . . Have the boys come home from school?" she asked Ida.

Tony, who from her perch on her grandfather's knee was looking out the window, called out in the same breath: "Tom and Christian are coming up Johannes Street . . . and Herr Hoffstede . . . and Uncle Doctor. . . ."

The bells of St. Mary's began to chime, ding-dong, ding-dong —

rather out of time, so that one could hardly tell what they were playing; still, it was very impressive. The big and the little bell announced, the one in lively, the other in dignified tones, that it was four o'clock; and at the same time a shrill peal from the bell over the vestibule door went ringing through the entry, and Tom and Christian entered, together with the first guests, Jean Jacques coloured. But he was thinner and more active than his old friend, Hoffstede, the poet, and Doctor Grabow, the family physician.



CHAPTER II

HERR JEAN JACQUES HOFFSTEDE was the town poet. He undoubtedly had a few verses in his pocket for the present occasion. He was nearly as old as Johann Buddenbrook, and dressed in much the same style except that his coat was green instead of mouse-coloured. But he was thinner and more active than his old friend, with bright little greenish eyes and a long pointed nose.

"Many thanks," he said, shaking hands with the gentlemen and bowing before the ladies — especially the Frau Consul, for whom he entertained a deep regard. Such bows as his it was not given to the younger generation to perform; and he accompanied them with his pleasant quiet smile. "Many thanks for your kind invitation, my dear good people. We met these two young ones, the Doctor and I" — he pointed to Tom and Christian, in their blue tunics and leather belts — "in King Street, coming home from school. Fine lads, eh, Frau Consul? Tom is a very solid chap. He'll have to go into the business, no doubt of that. But Christian is a devil of a fellow — a young *incroyable*, hey? I will not conceal my *engouement*. He must study, I think — he is witty and brilliant."

Old Buddenbrook used his gold snuff-box. "He's a young monkey, that's what he is. Why not say at once that he is to be a poet, Hoffstede?"

Mamsell Jungmann drew the curtains, and soon the room was bathed in mellow flickering light from the candles in the crystal chandelier and the sconces on the writing-desk. It lighted up golden gleams in the Frau Consul's hair.

"Well, Christian," she said, "what did you learn to-day?" It appeared that Christian had had writing, arithmetic, and singing lessons. He was a boy of seven, who already resembled his father to an almost comic extent. He had the same rather small round deep-set eyes and the same prominent aquiline nose; the lines of his face below the cheek-bones showed that it would not always retain its present child-like fulness.

"We've been laughing dreadfully," he began to prattle, his eyes

darting from one to another of the circle. "What do you think Herr Stengel said to Siegmund Kostermann?" He bent his back, shook his head, and declaimed impressively: "'Outwardly, outwardly, my dear child, you are sleek and smooth; but inwardly, my dear child, you are black and foul.' . . ." He mimicked with indiscribably funny effect not only the master's odd pronunciation but the look of disgust on his face at the "outward sleekness" he described. The whole company burst out laughing.

"Young monkey!" repeated old Buddenbrook. But Herr Hoffstede was in ecstasies. "*Charmant!*" he cried. "If you know Marcellus Stengel — that's he, to the life. Oh, that's too good!"

Thomas, to whom the gift of mimicry had been denied, stood near his younger brother and laughed heartily, without a trace of envy. His teeth were not very good, being small and yellowish. His nose was finely chiselled, and he strikingly resembled his grandfather in the eyes and the shape of the face.

The company had for the most part seated themselves on the chairs and the sofa. They talked with the children or discussed the unseasonable cold and the new house. Herr Hoffstede admired a beautiful Sèvres inkstand, in the shape of a black and white hunting dog, that stood on the *escritoire*. Doctor Grabow, a man of about the Consul's age, with a long mild face between thin whiskers, was looking at the table, set out with cakes and currant bread and salt-cellars in different shapes. This was the "bread and salt" that had been sent by friends for the house warming; but the "bread" consisted of rich, heavy pastries, and the salt came in dishes of massive gold, that the senders might not seem to be mean in their gifts.

"There will be work for me here," said the Doctor, pointing to the sweetmeats and threatening the children with his glance. Shaking his head, he picked up a heavy salt and pepper stand from the table.

"From Lebrecht Kröger," said old Buddenbrook, with a grimace. "Our dear kinsman is always open-handed. I did not spend as much on him when he built his summer house outside the Castle Gate. But he has always been like that — very lordly, very free with his money, a real cavalier à-la-mode. . . ."

The bell had rung several times. Pastor Wunderlich was announced; a stout old gentleman in a long black coat and powdered hair. He had twinkling grey eyes set in a face that was jovial if rather pale. He had been a widower for many years, and considered himself a bachelor of the old school, like Herr Gratjens, the broker, who entered with him. Herr Gratjens was a tall man who

went around with one of his thin hands up to his eye like a telescope, as if he were examining a painting. He was a well-known art connoisseur.

Among the other guests were Senator Doctor Langhals and his wife, both friends of many years' standing; and Köppen the wine-merchant, with his great crimson face between enormous padded sleeves. His wife, who came with him, was nearly as stout as he.

It was after half past four when the Krögers put in an appearance — the elders together with their children; the Consul Krögers with their sons Jacob and Jürgen, who were about the age of Tom and Christian. On their heels came the parents of Frau Consul Kröger, the lumber-dealer Overdieck and his wife, a fond old pair who still addressed each other in public with nicknames from the days of their early love.

"Fine people come late," said Consul Buddenbrook, and kissed his mother-in-law's hand.

"But look at them when they do come!" and Johann Buddenbrook included the whole Kröger connection with a sweeping gesture, and shook the elder Kröger by the hand. Lebrecht Kröger, the cavalier à-la-mode, was a tall, distinguished figure. He wore his hair slightly powdered, but dressed in the height of fashion, with a double row of jewelled buttons on his velvet waistcoat. His son Justus, with his turned-up moustache and small beard, was very like the father in figure and manner, even to the graceful easy motions of the hands.

The guests did not sit down, but stood about awaiting the principle event of the evening and passing the time in casual talk. At length, Johann Buddenbrook the older offered his arm to Madame Köppen and said in an elevated voice, "Well, *mesdames et messieurs*, if you are hungry . . ."

Mamsell Jungmann and the servant had opened the folding-doors into the dining-room; and the company made its way with studied ease to table. One could be sure of a good square meal at the Buddenbrooks'.



CHAPTER III

As the party began to move toward the dining-room, Consul Buddenbrook's hand went to his left breast-pocket and fingered a paper that was inside. The polite smile had left his face, giving place to a strained and care-worn look, and the muscles stood out on his temples as he clenched his teeth. For appearance's sake he made a few steps toward the dining-room, but stopped and sought his mother's eye as she was leaving the room on Pastor Wunderlich's arm, among the last of her guests.

"Pardon me, dear Herr Pastor . . . just a word with you, Mamma." The Pastor nodded gaily, and the Consul drew his Mother over to the window of the landscape-room.

"Here is a letter from Gotthold," he said in low, rapid tones. He took out the sealed and folded paper and looked into her dark eyes. "That is his writing. It is the third one, and Papa answered only the first. What shall I do? It came at two o'clock, and I ought to have given it to him already, but I do not like to upset him today. What do you think? I could call him out here. . . ."

"No, you are right, Jean; it is better to wait," said Madame Buddenbrook. She grasped her son's arm with a quick, habitual movement. "What do you suppose is in it?" she added uneasily. "The boy won't give in. He's taken it into his head he must be compensated for his share in the house. . . . No, no, Jean. Not now. To-night, perhaps, before we go to bed."

"What am I to do?" repeated the Consul, shaking his bent head. "I have often wanted to ask Papa to give in. I don't like it to look as if I had schemed against Gotthold and worked myself into a snug place. I don't want Father to look at it like that, either. But, to be honest . . . I am a partner, after all. And Betsy and I pay a fair rent for the second storey. It is all arranged with my sister in Frankfort: her husband gets compensation already, in Papa's lifetime — a quarter of the purchase price of the house. That is good business: Papa arranged it very cleverly, and it is very satisfactory from the point of view of the firm. And if Papa acts so unfriendly to Gotthold —"