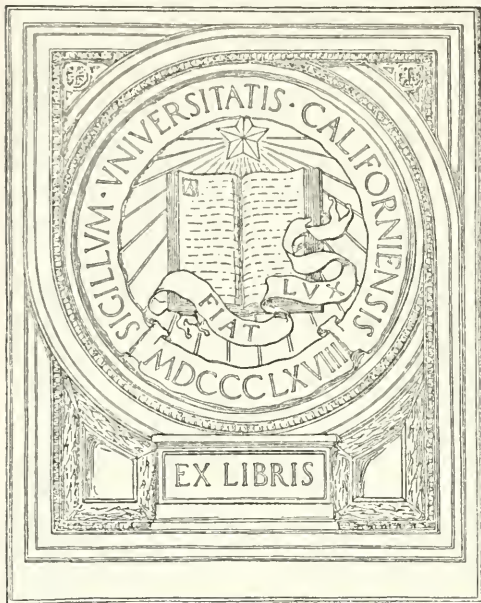


LIFE IN A GARRISON TOWN

BY I. J. TENANT BILSE

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
AT LOS ANGELES



THE GIFT OF
MAY TREAT MORRISON
IN MEMORY OF
ALEXANDER F MORRISON



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THE MILITARY NOVEL SUPPRESSED
BY THE GERMAN GOVERNMENT

LIFE IN A GARRISON TOWN

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THE MILITARY NOVEL
SUPPRESSED BY THE
GERMAN GOVERNMENT

By LIEUTENANT BILSE

THE AUTHORISED TRANSLATION OF
"AUS EINER KLEINEN GARNISON"
WITH A FOREWORD BY THEODORE
DREISER, AN INTRODUCTION BY
ARNOLD WHITE
AND A SUMMARY OF THE COURT-
MARTIAL

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TENTH EDITION

FOREWORD

BY THEODORE DREISER

THE history of this novel can be passed over as known. The attempt to make it an anti-military and anti-German document is artistically unimportant. But, in my opinion, the thing that should be said of the book is that it is sound realism, and better than that, and, in my judgment, because of it, good art. What we need, and what the sound intelligence of the world rejoices in, are true, unflinching pictures or presentations of life done after and through a temperament which is artistically sound. These may be conscious or unconscious; accidental or planned. What matter? Are they artistic? Real? Verifiable? Do they appeal to your instincts for verisimilitude—do they tally with your experience? Then they are good art and the very best things that life can give you. They need not apotheosize life, and in the last analysis do not. Life properly and artistically presented apotheosizes itself, and incidentally its handmaiden, the artist. Life is great, it is beautiful, it is artistic. Give us a picture of it in its balanced relation

Foreword

to other things and that picture is inherently beautiful and even thrilling. It cannot be otherwise.

Ten years ago I first heard of Lieutenant Bipse and his "Garrison Town," and the storm his book had raised in Germany. Somewhere I found it and read it. I perceived that as usual it was being received with sniffs or open denunciation by the promoralistic—those dear people who always lift their skirts and pass by on the other side. At that time in America as well as in England it was commented on as being compounded of debauchery, lying, eavesdropping, adultery and so on. I remember one promoralistic editor whose magazine has since been turned to veiled sensuality in literature in order to gain good money, whose lips curled superiorly as he explained that it was "just filth indulged in by a vile mind, and not art." If it had presented some European toy soldier—a count perhaps—storming citadels of power, spouting moral maxims and triumphing in enduring romantic love all would have been well. It would have been undying art—for that year. As it was, it was a crime against literature, and as such needed to be at once suppressed.

Foreword

What are you to do with a world that loves lies, and make-believe, and spume? What are you to say of two billion mortals more or less who say one thing and do another—are animals and believe they are holy men? When the plain ordinary facts of life are perpetually blinked at and people will not tolerate in any artist a moving, honest representation of life as it is, then what? The Venus de Milo is immoral; Botticelli's Spring is immoral. The lady is *enciente*. Michael Angelo's Medici tomb figures are immoral. Balzac is immoral, Flaubert is immoral, Tolstoy is immoral. Only Laura Jean Libbey's novels and the priests and bishops are moral. Life should be ashamed of itself! Or so we are led to believe.

And so now comes another scoundrel and writes another immoral book. He did not know he was a scoundrel, perhaps, until he sat down to write and felt that he owed it to his conscience to picture the world as he saw it. Then he was a scoundrel, should have realized that the world reserves severe punishment for scoundrels, should have stultified his conscience and written a "Graustark," or "The Story of the Rosary." Alas, the man was incorruptibly immoral. He would say

Foreword

what was true. Into the guard house! And there he eventually landed.

But what of his book? I recall its being denounced as vulgar, shabby, a snouting of muck, etc. All good Christians and moralists at once put it aside, or went down the next street for fear of coming in contact with it. It was tabooed.

After ten years of forgetfulness and indifference it comes to life again here,—after the leaves of ten thousand romantic masterpieces and best sellers have settled down on it and presumably buried it forever. Why? Why didn't it die? Why didn't the other things applauded by my friend the editor live?

Was it because it is full of debauchery, lying, eavesdropping, and blackmailing, as has been moralistically said here, there, and everywhere—as usual?

In part no doubt because life has much of these, and romantic novels do not indicate them.

Or is it because it was an indictment of gigantic evils—deadly moral and physical wrongs in the German army?—as the promoralist has declared.

No doubt—for evil is ever persistent, even in Germany.

Foreword

Or could it be due to the fact that Lieutenant Bilsse was an officer and sent to jail, and that Germany has now gone to war?

In part yes, and yet, only in small part,—for the book *was* before Lieutenant Bilsse was sent to jail, and it sent him there.

No—not any one of these things entirely nor all of them together, but for a very much greater reason.

To get at the true inwardness of this thing one must look for the temperament of the true artist—that sweetness and liberality of spirit, delicate, emotional, unmoral, appreciative, coupled with a divine enthusiasm for life as a picture—which permits Life, quite as a materialized ghost, for instance, and by the aid of the personality of a medium, to stand before you seemingly real, harmonious, a fine presentation of the subtleties, incongruities, beauties, lecheries, materialities, and spiritualities of this too, too solid flesh.

I have to smile at the testimony given in the back of one edition of this book—the testimony taken at Metz, where Lieutenant Bilsse was tried. The Presiding Judge—(to Pharmacist Dreesen of Forbach):

Did you recognize all the characters in the book?

Foreword

Pharmacist Dreesen—Yes. The most life-like are Frau Ey and Major Fuchs. All Forbach was full of it; even the ordinary laborers had read the book.

The Presiding Judge (to Major Fuchs of Forbach)—It is said that you made her (Frau Ey's) complaints the subjects of official discussion, and ordered your officers to *dancing* spurs because her dress had been torn at a ball, and that you reprimanded them for not kissing her hand, which was in a dirty riding glove of her husband's.

Major Fuchs—I remember the order, but not that Frau Ey was the cause.

The Presiding Judge—It is said that you were in the habit of ordering such expensive bowls of punch at the casino parties that it caused the officers great and unnecessary expense.

Major Fuchs—If it was done it was with the consent of all. At any rate, as I always use cheap wines, the expense could not have exceeded two marks a head.

The Presiding Judge (to Lieutenant Lindner)—Are the circumstances true, as there described, of Frau Erdler's presence in your house?

Lieutenant Lindner—Yes, we were very

Foreword

intimate with the Erdlers. He was a fine man, and she seemed a most honorable woman. Indeed, she told my wife that with the exception of her, no one was left in the regiment with whom she cared to associate.

. . . When her husband was transferred to Spandau she begged my wife to let her stay with us until the moving was over. During the last days of her visit she changed very much and became very excitable. One day she received a letter, read it, tore it up, and threw the pieces into the fireplace. She explained that she was invited that afternoon to Frau Goeben's. She went out, and as late at night she had not returned, my wife became very anxious, so I sent an orderly to the Goebens to see her home. He did not find her there, nor, it seems, had she been invited, upon which I sent him to Major Fuchs to find out if she was there, and she was not. At eleven o'clock we heard her creep into her room. My wife had in the meantime picked up the torn letter out of the fireplace. It said: "My treasure, I am waiting for you at the usual place." I was furious to find how this woman had abused our hospitality. I at once went to Major Fuchs with the letter, as it was my duty to

Foreword

under the circumstances. He said: "I do not want to know what is in the letter. Turn the woman out of doors. She has ceased to be the wife of an officer." In the morning when Frau Erdler came down I requested her to leave my house. I have never seen her since."

What do these things indicate? Lies, an immoral, dishonest mind in Lieutenant Bilse, or a keen power to observe the romance, failure, humor, and color of life? But what say the moralists? "Scandalous! Unclean! Unclean! Cover it up! Never speak of it! Let no critic praise this as literature!" "But it is literature," we say, and strange to say, all great art is, like it, an uncovering of the visible scene in its balanced proportions—not ten gallons of romance and make-believe to one gill of fact, a hero nine feet tall to a scoundrel of three inches—but a balanced picturing of things as they are,—one gallon of fact to one of romance, or more if necessary or in those happy proportions which life itself arranges.

Life is the thing we are all trying to delineate. Life, its terrors and perfections, and he is the greatest artist who does this best. So in this book I rank Lieutenant Bilse high,—

Foreword

his force as an artist—for here is life, a small fragment, it is true, but a veritable chip of the sacred Caaba of fact.

THEODORE DREISER

INTRODUCTION

AT the beginning of the last century Prussia received a lesson and a chastisement from France. Profiting by experience, she reorganised her system of education, her civil service, and her army. In due time she became a great Power by obedience to the teachings of Stein, Hardenberg, and von Scharnhorst. Compulsory military service, combined with compulsory education, brought Prussia by slow and imperceptible degrees to so high a standard of intellectual and moral development, that by 1871 the German nation had become the most enlightened and the most disciplined in Europe, having attained at a single stroke the highest place among the Continental Powers. For two decades after the victory of Sedan no one dreamed of disputing the place which Germany had won for herself among the armed nations of the world; but prosperity and the riches which rewarded a century of self-denial slowly worked subtle changes in the social system of the German

Introduction

people. Indulgence in luxury, inseparable from commercial success, soon began to taint the army itself — a miracle of organisation and efficiency as a man-slaying machine when controlled by von Moltke and von Roon. When the Emperor William II. came to the throne in 1888, he brought to the execution of his difficult task rare qualities of intellect, imagination and will. The rigid discipline imposed on the army by his ancestors was maintained with a rigour unknown in England, and repugnant to democracy everywhere. The division of the German nation into two castes — those in the service of the Emperor and private citizens — became absolute. The officer caste enjoy privileges and social distinction denied to the civilian population, and thereby are partly remunerated for iron discipline and for scanty pay. Within the last ten years a large number of the officers of the German army, most of whom are poor men, have contracted debts on a scale which, in the opinion of military students of other nations, already impairs the efficiency of the army.

More than a generation has passed since the conquering German legions returned to their own firesides elated with the success

Introduction

they had won in the stricken field. Is the German army to-day of the same quality as that which passed from victory to victory on the soil of France?

The answer to this question is contained in Lieutenant Bilse's book, which is here translated with consummate skill for the benefit of English readers. Its publication in Germany was punished by arrest, a court-martial, and the imprisonment of its author for six months and his expulsion from the German army. It is impossible to exaggerate the sensation that has been caused by this book in Germany, while in Austria and France, where it has been published, and is known to the General Staff, revelations of degeneracy in the "invincible" German army have aroused the keenest interest.

When Lieutenant Bilse was consigned to prison the attention of the whole world was attracted to his book, because the public were convinced that, if the book had been in the main untrue, the chiefs of the German army would never have condescended to raise the storm that followed the conviction of its author.

The cruel truth of this book is both its merit and its demerit, for the author, with

Introduction

striking audacity, has exposed the crying evils of which he was a witness, and unconsciously — as he testifies in the court-martial — so faithfully limned the characters of his associates and superiors that each was promptly recognised in the living counterpart. The officers who unknowingly sat as models for Lieutenant Bilse's gallery of portraits have themselves paid the penalty for the cruelties, corruption and debauchery described in his disclosures. They have been retired from the service, and this action on the part of the authorities is a demonstration of the truth of Lieutenant Bilse's indictment of the military system and of the existence of the evils he has described.

Lieutenant Bilse's obvious aim is to expose the deterioration of the military system. It is true that he deals only with a little frontier garrison, where the monotony of a daily routine consumes only a fraction of the energies and a part of the time of the garrison, while cruelty and debauchery are the inevitable fruits of idleness and formalism. The great socialist party in Germany, and the thoughtful men of all parties who are not enamoured of Bismarckian militarism, acknowledge that the publication of this

Introduction

book in Germany is marked by an audacity of courage deserving the gratitude of the nation. A mere subaltern, this German David has laid violent hands on the Goliath of the army system idolised by German bureaucracy, womankind, and the Press. The idol is found to have feet of clay. The youth and the audacity of Lieutenant Bilsé have procured for him the sobriquet of the *enfant terrible* of the German army. He has blurted out the naked truth, with consequences it is impossible to foresee. The Kaiser is a man who knows how to take occasion by the hand, who faces facts and shuns self-deception with a courage and clear-sightedness that were not characteristic of all his predecessors. The Kaiser, moreover, as the present writer can testify from personal knowledge, is the greatest apostle of efficiency on the European Continent. He knows that the divorce of military despotism from efficiency is the forerunner of military collapse and Imperial wreck. It is, therefore, certain that Lieutenant Bilsé's revelations will, so far as the Kaiser can control events, be the cause of far-reaching changes in the administration of the German army. And yet the Kaiser himself confirmed the verdict.

Introduction

The life-history of Lieutenant Oswald Fritz Bilse does not differ from that of tens of thousands of his late brother-officers. He was born in Kirn on the River Nahe, a branch of the Rhine, on March 31st, 1878. His father is headmaster of a school in Thüringen, where his son was educated until the time came for his transfer to the gymnasium at Eisenach. In 1896 he expressed a desire to enter the army, as he had formed a taste for military life. Two years later Bilse was appointed Lieutenant. From Cassel, where he was first stationed, he was sent to Forbach, which is the little garrison he has immortalised in his novel. In Forbach Lieutenant Bilse seems to have been left much to his own resources, and here his most intimate friend was Captain Bandel, the Captain König of the novel. Although Bilse entered on a military career with bright confidence and the high hopes of youth, disillusion soon followed the experiences of his soldier life. In 1903, having completed his novel, he sent in his resignation just before its publication. Being a young man of talent and active mind, he then decided to study painting at the Beaux-Arts in Berlin. It was rumoured

Introduction

that he had to leave the army because of his debts, but that was not true, for the charges of extravagance brought against him were dispelled by the facts of the case. He is a lover of books, with an artistic temperament and the modern taste for old furniture. Like all young soldiers, he was sometimes inclined to rebel against the iron discipline to which he was subjected. Several records of small punishments appear against his name in the regimental books. Short arrests—on one occasion for a disrespectful reply to a superior officer, and at another time for spending six weeks in London without leave—are the black marks against his name in a report signed by Major Fuchs, his commanding officer, with whom he was no favourite, and whom he has called in the novel Colonel Kronau. Bilse is described by his Colonel as pretentious, and with a taste for extravagance unbecoming his rank. Colonel Kronau, however, admits that with all his defects Bilse is a good, active, and intelligent officer.

Had the Lieutenant's resignation been accepted before the book appeared, the authorities would have been powerless against him. But as he was still on the books of

Introduction

the army, he was arrested for disobeying the stringent military order that no officer is permitted to publish any work without the consent of the authorities, and further, that he had infringed military discipline by libelling his superiors and comrades.

In due time he was brought up for trial by court-martial, which lasted from the 9th to the 11th November, 1903. A lad of twenty-five was confronted by all the forces of the Imperial Government for describing in his book the sordid debauchery and senseless tyranny of garrison life in the provinces. The importance of the trial arose from the fact that the military life of Forbach differed in no way from innumerable other small towns of the same kind. The isolated life of military detachments is apt to produce deterioration not only in Germany, but in other countries. In the British army, for example, the tone of the isolated garrisons, as in St. Helena and other coaling-stations, is absolutely dependent upon the good sense and high principle of the commanding officer. The Boer War and the subsequent Royal Commission revealed enough to show that it is unwise for critics who live in the English glass-

Introduction

house to throw stones at their German neighbours.

Bilse's defence was that his novel was only a work of imagination. He contended that he had simply tried to describe definite existing evils of military life without having any intention of being personal in any of his descriptions of officers at Forbach, and that he had only made use of his undoubted right as an author to describe such events as came under his notice and such traits as helped him in the delineation of his characters. He further stated that if he had written anything that was libellous he was innocent of intent, and that although he had written his book while still in the army, he had sent in his resignation before its publication.

Within recent years the description of military life had inspired the genius of many of the most powerful writers in Germany. The subject, indeed, had actually created a school of dramatists and novelists, and the result had been a large addition both to the drama and to literature. The difference between the book of Lieutenant Bilse and those of other German writers is that, while their works were the product of imagination, Germany was thrilled throughout by this

Introduction

book because the melancholy and sordid facts recorded therein were narrated by a man who had lived his life in the atmosphere he described, and who was himself an actor in a tragedy the like of which exists in every German military station.

It is impossible for Englishmen to grasp the immense effect of Lieutenant Bilsé's book, because compulsory military service renders every youth and every parent in Germany personally and directly interested in the facts related by Bilsé. The knowledge that every healthy male in Germany must submit to the military conditions and breathe the atmosphere described as existing in the town of Forbach stirred Germany to its depths, because family life, which is still the dominant note throughout the Kaiser's dominions, was touched in its tenderest spot by this recital of tyranny, debauchery, and crime.

It is too early to say whether the Kaiser and his General Staff will succeed in reforming the evils described by Lieutenant Bilsé. That his Majesty will use every effort to do so may be assumed, for the German people who give their sons to their country are highly-educated and reflecting

Introduction

people, and their claim on the Emperor that the young men shall not be sent back to their parents physically and morally degenerate is irresistible. The gratitude of these fathers and mothers to Lieutenant Bilse for speaking the truth and for undergoing imprisonment is real, but it cannot be expressed. I have reason to know that even his own relations are unable to evince the sympathy or express the feelings which naturally arise. The imprisonment and punishment of Bilse is an exemplification of the Spanish proverb — “Who would be a Christ must expect crucifixion.” The prophet who laments when he is punished for striking a blow for the commonwealth in the public service scarcely deserves the name of a prophet, for the people who do the greatest service to the human race and who bring about widespread and lasting reform are those who in their lifetimes must endure the opposition and earn the hatred of all who profit by the existing system.

This book of Lieutenant Bilse has had its parallel both in France and in England. In France the novel, “*Les Maritimes*,” exposed the life of naval society at Toulon in precisely the same manner as the life in For-

Introduction

bach is revealed by Lieutenant Bilsse. The English equivalent to the German novel, "Life in a Garrison Town," and to the French novel, "Les Maritimes," is it not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Royal Commission on the War?

ARNOLD WHITE

LIFE IN A GARRISON TOWN

CHAPTER I

IN a large sitting-room, furnished with both comfort and elegance, Frau Clara König was putting the last touches to the preparations for receiving her guests.

One evening in the week she always had music, to which such of her intimate friends as were musical were invited. To-night a few outside the circle had been asked to witness, as it were, the triumph of the "artists."

The lady of the house here changed the position of a chair, or there, with light touch, smoothed an embroidery, of which there were many worked by her own hands in various colours and designs. She carefully examined the lamps to see how long they would burn, opened the piano and the harmonium, and threw a last fond glance at the flowers to see if the vases displayed their fragrant con-

Life in a Garrison Town

tents from the best point of view. This was her delight, and even in the depths of winter there were always a few flowers, or at least a small plant, on the chimney-piece or in the window.

Of medium height, and with a graceful figure, Frau Clara was a woman of about thirty. Her pretty fresh face, sunny blue eyes and fair hair tastefully arranged, made her look very young and attractive.

She sank into an arm-chair now that everything was in order, though indeed everything always was in order.

At this moment the curtain of the door into the next room was flung aside and her husband, a tall man with a black moustache, came in to do his share of the work, for it was his duty to light the chandelier. He usually reckoned in the proportion of one jet for each guest, but to-night he lighted the whole chandelier, for many were expected, and there were only five burners in all. So he lighted them with a taper that stood handy in the chimney-corner, grumbled about the extortionate gas bills, and then emptying the coal-scuttle on the fire, flung in a piece of paper after to prevent its smoking; then he also dropped into a chair.

Life in a Garrison Town

Herr Albert König was an excellent type of a cavalry officer. He kept his squadron in the best order, and devoted to it the greatest zeal and the most unremitting care. If he happened to have time and leisure he read *Die Deutsche Zeitung*, or studied the columns of the financial news, or worked in his well-kept garden, or watched over his poultry yard, for he sold the eggs that came from there to his wife at a high price. If he had nothing else to do he planned and fought battles with his nine year old son, or sampled wines, being an excellent judge, or he practised the piano, which he really played like a master.

A noise in the ante-room announced the first guest. They heard a long halting step and a violent puffing. The door opened and in came Landrat von Konradi, a portly gentleman, his aristocratic nose surmounted by eye-glasses, above which his eyes searched for his hostess. His hair was evidently by nature grey, but was dyed black; a concession, spiteful tongues declared, to the fair sex. Be it added, the Herr Landrat was a bachelor. His ideal in life had taken the pleasant shape of good dinners and the finest wines, and as both could be found at

Life in a Garrison Town

the Captain's he was glad to come; he was also considered quite a gentleman. Just as he was describing to his hostess with great indignation how a pheasant, which he had himself ordered, was sent to him in a perfectly uneatable condition, the door again opened, and Frau Rittmeister Kahle came in. With a slight graceful figure and a face like a naughty boy's, she was on the whole very fetching, though there was an eternal smile about her rather large mouth, and when she spoke her voice was singularly harsh and shrill.

She was followed by three young men, the first of whom was Lieutenant Pommer. He was very much liked because of his frank, straightforward manners; if these sometimes made him seem rather rude, no one took offence, for all knew how it was meant. He greeted Frau Kahle with especial cordiality, and the contrast between the big burly man and the little Dresden China figure was very amusing.

The second was Lieutenant Müller. Though one might not know that he was the Adjutant of the regiment, one could not but suspect it, for so self-satisfied was his face and so stiff his bearing. He was the

Life in a Garrison Town

terror of all hostesses, for he had an insatiable appetite, and he devoured with the greatest equanimity three times as much as any ordinary mortal. Even when his neighbours at table had laid down their knives and forks, he would go on helping himself for the third time with the interesting announcement that this was something he particularly liked to eat.

The last of the three was Lieutenant Kolberg, a strikingly pale young man with a boldly turned-up moustache. He led a very irregular life and boasted of an exceedingly dissipated past.

While waiting for the rest of the guests, the company gathered in groups. Lieutenant Kolberg joined Frau Kahle and measured her approvingly from head to foot. The Adjutant inquired of Frau König what she proposed giving them to eat, and, on being told, assured her that these were all his favourite dishes. The Landrat chatted with the Rittmeister about a wine-tasting trip they were planning together for the purpose of refilling their wine cellars with new treasures.

Again the door opened and in darted a great, fat lady, most outrageously powdered,

Life in a Garrison Town

and whose badly-fitting black and yellow dress was made in the worst possible taste.

She rushed up to Frau Clara, squeezed her hand with her round, fat fingers, and thanked her effusively for her invitation, then turning to the gentlemen held her big, fleshy hand so close under their noses that there was no escape for them, and they were forced to imprint on it the customary kiss.

This was Frau Rittmeister Stark, the bride of the regiment, so to speak, though more than fifty summers had passed over her head. She was followed by an equally fat husband who tripped in behind her. He wore a black "imperial," and his little finger was decorated by an enormously long nail, the care of which occupied much of his leisure time. To judge from his voice he was not a prejudiced total abstainer.

Behind this couple there presently appeared the figure of the Commander. All bowed low, and deferentially made way for him to pass as he strode towards Rittmeister König and his wife. Colonel von Kronau's crooked legs and harsh face could hardly be said to give to him the appearance of distinction which one expects in the com-

Life in a Garrison Town

mander of a regiment; in mufti he might have been mistaken for a small farmer, a station with which his language was quite in keeping.

Then, too, he always had a tear gathering in his eye, and it was his habit when it reached a suitable size, with an automatic shake of his head, to flick it to the feet or on the clothes of the person with whom he was talking. The lady who followed him with a forbidding face and an ill-fitting grey dress, trimmed with a red velvet collar, was his wife.

The rest of the company now arrived, headed by First Lieutenant Borgert. He rarely looked anyone whom he favoured with his conversation straight in the face. Though rather stout, his figure was supple and well made. Behind him stood First Lieutenant Leimann, a small, rather misshapen man, with a pear-shaped head wedged in between two high shoulders. His little pig's eyes glanced furtively about or were so contracted together that they quite disappeared from view. The single eye-glass, which swung from a cord, he did not dare to use for fear of making himself ridiculous.

These two gentlemen lived in the same

Life in a Garrison Town

house and were very intimate, and the fact of both being perennially and chronically hard up was possibly the bond of sympathy, though it must be confessed that it did not prevent their gratifying every whim; and, indeed, they lived as if heirs to great riches.

“I hope you will excuse my wife, gnädige Frau,” Leimann said to Frau König, “but she is suffering from her usual trouble, a nervous headache.” As he said this, he looked as if he doubted his own excuse. “Of course she will come later on as soon as she feels better.”

“I am so sorry,” Frau Clara answered pleasantly, “and I hope the headache will not last long. I shall be so glad to see your wife.”

Now that little Lieutenant Bleibtreu, the closest friend of the family and the only subaltern who belonged to Rittmeister König’s squadron, had also arrived, dinner was announced, and the guests passed into the dining-room, and sat down at the prettily decorated table.

The silence was at first rather oppressive, but no sooner were the plates filled than conversation became more animated.

“The weather has been so beautiful these

Life in a Garrison Town

last days that we really can soon begin tennis," said the wife of Colonel von Kronau.

"Certainly," replied the Colonel, his mouth full; "I shall call a meeting of the Club next week, and then we can go ahead."

"How perfectly delightful!" Frau Stark cried in ecstasy. "I adore tennis! I do hope you all do! You used to be so keen about it, dear little Frau Kahle. What do you think, Frau König?"

"I let it alone; it doesn't suit me."

"And your husband?"

"I never play tennis," the Rittmeister replied; "I don't understand the game, but I rather like to look on when the women who play are graceful."

Frau Stark's lips came together with a snap, and she glanced furiously across at the Captain. What did he mean by his "graceful women"? Was it an impertinent allusion to her? It really served her right, for it was perfectly ridiculous to see how this elderly person put on the airs and graces of a young girl. In her old age she had even mounted an old regimental hack in order to learn to ride because the other ladies did.

"I dare say a good many civilians will

Life in a Garrison Town

join," the Colonel continued. "I will send the list round."

The guests looked incredulously at each other, for the Colonel was on the worst conceivable terms with the civilians for many reasons, and was always avoided by them on every possible occasion.

"I'll join," Landrat von Konradi interposed, "unless it gets too hot. But I can't play next week. I have no time. I must stick my peas, or it will be too late."

"To be sure," Rittmeister König acquiesced, "or they will not ripen."

"What! Peas won't ripen? Peas always ripen if they are properly planted," the Colonel's wife retorted in some heat.

"But, dear lady, you can't be positively sure. So many things have to be taken into account."

"No, not at all, Herr Rittmeister. I have a method by which they always must ripen."

"I shall be curious to know what it is, for last year nearly all my peas were spoilt."

"They have to be planted by moonshine, and not a word must be spoken; then they always do well. Mine do. I am not a bit superstitious, but you can believe what I tell you."

Life in a Garrison Town

When the Colonel's wife made an assertion it took some courage to contradict her, but Lieutenant Bleibtreu ventured to say with a smile :

“ I suppose, then, if someone were to plant pork in between in the sunshine, the result would be pork and peas.”

“ You think yourself very clever, Lieutenant Bleibtreu, and you can make all the fun you please, but it is true all the same,” the Colonel's wife retorted spitefully. “ Besides, I have no time next week, for my *pâtés de fois gras* are not done.”

“ You cook them yourself, do you ? ” the Adjutant asked, deeply interested.

“ Of course. I always put up six jars. My husband simply adores the stuff.”

“ From whom do you buy your truffles ? I am myself trying to find a reliable source.”

“ What — truffles ! It tastes just as good without truffles. That is only imagination.”

“ But, dear lady, the truffles are the most important part of all.”

“ Nonsense ! I never use truffles.”

“ Goose livers,” Lieutenant Bleibtreu interposed banteringly, “ should be cooked during an eclipse of the moon, and that will turn them a beautiful brown.”

Life in a Garrison Town

“You may laugh if you wish, but it is true all the same.”

And so it seemed, for no one ventured on further contradiction. But the Colonel's wife had to put a curb on her eloquence, for all now rose to greet the wife of Lieutenant Leimann. She stood in the doorway of the dining-room, an enchanting smile on her fresh young face.

“You must not be angry, Frau König. I really did have such important letters to write. But do, pray, all be seated again.”

“We thought you had a headache,” everybody exclaimed.

“Headache? Of course—so I had. But one forgets when one has them so often.”

She was very young, only twenty-five, and very beautiful, and she was dressed in exquisite taste. She seated herself opposite Lieutenant Borgert.

Conversation now became more general; everybody talked and did justice to the good things set before them, especially to *Labskaus*, a dish of stewed tripe, for which Frau Clara's cook was famous.

The Adjutant had only opened his mouth to stuff in huge lumps, and an occasional unintelligible grunt testified to his complete

Life in a Garrison Town

satisfaction. He was still eating when the hostess finally rose. There was a general wishing of "*Gesegnete Mahlzeit*," and then everybody strolled into the adjoining rooms, where coffee was served to the ladies, and liqueurs, beer and cigars to the gentlemen.

The guests again gathered in groups, and the Colonel seemed to think the occasion favourable for an official discussion with his adjutant. He thereupon strolled into the next room, where he engaged in a very animated conversation with Frau Stark, but, as it was carried on in rather low tones, only an occasional sentence could reach Lieutenant Borgert's ears, who was listening.

"You *must* succeed!" he heard the lady whisper.

"I hope the inspection will prove satisfactory," the Colonel replied, "but since last time the inspecting officers are on the lookout for your husband; they began in the stables by being dissatisfied with the condition of the straw."

"I go through the stable every morning, and I tell you I make 'em step lively there! But of course I can't help it if my husband loses his head during inspection. Last time I watched the whole thing through field-

Life in a Garrison Town

glasses, and all went well to almost the end, when the line broke in wheeling. Besides, he gave the wrong word of command."

"Well, we will hope for the best! But, you see, if one wishes to become a Major, it means redoubled attention and care, for if anything goes wrong, one's superiors are down on one at once."

"I don't care, Colonel; my husband has got to be made a Major, and if you drop us — why ——"

"There, don't worry, dear lady! Without any justification whatever I have written him a good conduct report, which is simply brilliant. So you see I am doing my best."

"But you owe me that, Colonel, for without me you might not be — never mind, but you know."

Here Captain König came towards them.

"Shall you join our wine-sampling trip down the Moselle next week, Colonel? Landrat von Konradi is going, and I hear that some wonderful vintages are to be for sale."

"Of course, my dear König, you know I am always ready for anything of the kind. Besides, I enjoy a wine trip with

Life in a Garrison Town

you; you have proved to-night, not for the first time, that you are indeed a connoisseur."

"Really, you are too flattering, Herr Oberst! But I see you are not smoking. You will find everything you need in my room."

The Colonel strolled into the next room, where Frau Kahle and Lieutenant Pommer were chatting in one corner, while several young men surrounded Frau König in another.

Just then Lieutenant Leimann came in from the dining-room followed by his wife, whose sulky face brightened as Lieutenant Borgert approached her and engaged her in conversation.

"What domestic affairs have been bothering you now, dear lady?"

"Me? Nothing of the kind, only my husband has been rather abusive for a change. You know his ill-bred way of becoming insulting all at once."

"What is the matter now? I should have thought the quarrel of this afternoon might have been sufficient."

"He is furious now because I said I had to write letters after he gave as excuse that

Life in a Garrison Town

I had a headache. I am sick to death of these eternal quarrels.”

“Sufficient ground that for divorce, gnädige Frau,” Lieutenant Borgert replied, laughing. “Choose another husband, if this one doesn’t suit you.”

“It’s easy enough to make fun, but you don’t know how I sometimes loathe it all.”

“So much the better, gnädige Frau. Choose among the noblest of the land. Possibly I might suggest someone.”

“Fire away, then!” Frau Leimann cried, with a roguish upward glance.

“Well, I know someone. What would you say to me?”

“It’s worth considering; but first, what have you to offer?”

“Let us sit down and discuss this very serious matter,” Borgert answered, laughing, and led the way to a sofa.

“Now, listen. I offer you a noble establishment, horses and carriages, a villa on the lake of Zurich and an army of servants.”

“And who is to pay for all this?”

“Pay? Why, who pays nowadays? It’s quite out of fashion and bad form; it is the way in which people squander most of their

Life in a Garrison Town

money. I never pay, and yet I gratify every wish."

"That is all very delightful," Frau Leimann laughed; "but you see there is — my husband."

"To be sure he is still yours, but in the meantime you might get accustomed to me."

Frau Leimann nodded and smiled, then, with her head in her hand, stared dreamily at the carpet.

Borgert too had suddenly grown grave, and the other guests having left the room, his eyes sought hers.

"Why do you look at me so, Herr Borgert? You frighten me."

"I think so many things that I have no right to speak of, gnädige Frau. A great many true things are said in jest and for that very reason strike deeper."

"You speak in riddles, my friend. I think we had better change the subject. Suppose we follow the others. There'll be talk if they find us sitting alone."

She rose, and as Borgert hurriedly raised her hand to kiss it she made no effort to draw it away, and her face was as innocent and unconscious as that of a child, when she entered the music-room. Borgert did not

Life in a Garrison Town

follow her. He remained behind and in the dim light took a letter out of his coat pocket and read it. Then with a suppressed oath he thrust it back and sat there lost in thought.

In the meantime the next room had become very lively. The sound of fiddles, the deep tuning of a violoncello, and a few chords from the piano summoned all the guests together, for now the musical part of the evening was about to begin. Rittmeister König sat at the harmonium, while his wife accompanied him on the piano. Landrat von Konradi and Lieutenant Leimann stood ready, their violins under their chins, while Lieutenant Bleibtreu, with his 'cello between his knees, had retired into the background.

The listeners, on big and little chairs, gathered about the fireplace and the table, which was covered with beer glasses, and there waited with an air of expectation.

The music began: a trio of Reinhardt. It sounded very well, for they had all practised most industriously, and the effect was pleasant. To be sure the Landrat had a little habit of balancing himself first on one foot and then on the other in time to his bowing, and he also accompanied his per-

Life in a Garrison Town

formance by rather disturbing grunts. Leimann, too, belonged to the class of artists whom it is really painful to watch for fear of spoiling one's pleasure, for his head had quite disappeared between his shoulders and his doubled-up figure looked more than ever mis-shapen. The violoncellist occasionally struck a few false notes, but to make up for this he always played the next following bars with redoubled vigour to prove that, in spite of accidents, he was the master of his instrument. The trio was followed by solos for each violinist, and these by a rhapsody of Liszt, splendidly performed by Rittmeister König and his wife. There was a chorus of approval at the end and everybody tried to show how much they knew about music by being very critical.

"My dear Lieutenant Bleibtreu," Frau Stark cried, "you really must give me some violoncello lessons. I used to play when I was young, but I am afraid I have forgotten it all now."

No one doubted for an instant that it was a good long time since the days of her youth, and König whispered to Bleibtreu that her fat fingers would never be able to produce a tone.

Life in a Garrison Town

In the meantime Borgert had strolled towards the entrance of the room and from there he looked at his fellow-guests with an expression of unutterable boredom. Occasionally he turned a watchful glance on Frau Leimann, who, sunk in a low deep arm-chair, was staring before her with dreamy, half-closed eyes.

The artists having now joined the other guests at the table, conversation started afresh, but about ordinary, everyday matters, in which Frau von Kronau took the leading part, for she was an intolerable chatterbox.

The time passed very quickly ; but when the clock pointed to half-past ten the Colonel looked with conjugal emphasis at his wife, who nodded, rose, and turned to her hostess.

“Dear Frau König, it was lovely of you to give us such a delightful evening ; but it is so late, we really must go. Thank you so much,” and she shook Frau König’s hand.

“Going already ? But it is not eleven o’clock yet. You really might stay a moment longer.”

However, as soon as Frau König saw the Colonel, the Starks and the Landrat taking

Life in a Garrison Town

leave of the other guests, she gave up all further entreaty, glad, in her heart, to have only a small circle left about her with whom conversation might be carried on without weighing every word for fear the Colonel would not approve, the possible result of which might be a sharp official reprimand the next day. The Colonel was rather notorious for this.

As soon as the guests had left the house, those who remained drew their chairs closer together and fresh glasses of beer were passed.

Borgert was the first to break the silence.

“Did you notice how that Stark woman whispered to the Colonel? She ought to leave her bad manners at home, where I hear they are not very particular. Imagine! I was there the other day just as Stark flung a slipper at her. She had come in to receive me in a very dirty house-dress.”

“That is nothing,” Leimann interrupted. “They were having one of their usual rows before me when the old fathead shut her up with ‘Hold your jaw.’”

“It would appear that their ways are not the ways of peace,” the Adjutant added. “Day before yesterday Stark got rather

Life in a Garrison Town

drunk at the 'White Swan,' and by the time he was well fuddled his wife came in, kicked up a row and carried him off, while everybody roared with laughter. I don't believe they kissed each other when they got home."

"That happens often enough," another chimed in. "She fetches him home from the casino to dinner, and calls him a 'beast' before the orderly."

"Ah, well," said König, "she is taking the best of care of her husband, for he wants to become a Major or, rather, she wishes to become Major."

"But that is perfectly impossible," Borgert cried indignantly; "if this incompetent ass becomes Major I ought to be made a general. But every one can see that the Colonel is doing all in his power for him."

"He has a mighty good reason for that," Leimann said with emphasis.

"What reason?"

"Don't you know the story? Why, the very sparrows twitter it on the house-tops."

"No, do tell us, this is really wildly interesting," and Borgert rubbed his hands and moved his chair closer to his friend.

Life in a Garrison Town

“Last year, it seems, the Colonel, with his usual notorious want of tact, very grossly insulted a civilian. The latter at once sent him a challenge. Now the good Colonel did not enjoy that at all, for though he is very ready with his tongue, as you know, when there is any risk his heart sinks down into his boots. So the result was that his dear friend, the Stark woman, goes to this gentleman and tells him that she alone is to blame for the insult because she had told a lie. In this way she saved the Colonel’s life, for the other man is a dead shot. And now she has him well under her thumb, and when she commands he obeys her like a lap-dog.”

“That is glorious,” cried Borgert. “Do you know any more stories? It’s high time that we got rid of these arrogant creatures! He has the manners of a stable-boy and she of a washer-woman. I mean to be on the watch to see what I can find out. It’s a shame that we have to stand this woman.”

“She is also said to have been on very intimate terms with some nobleman or other, at least so the story goes.”

“How do you know?”

Life in a Garrison Town

“My man told me the other day. He is from her part of the country.”

“Just think of it! I shall really have to make inquiries myself, for of course she isn't worth paying a detective to do so! The . . .! Well, the word on my tongue is not permissible in polite circles.”

“But I am surprised that she has the cheek to give herself such airs, considering her antecedents.”

“That's just her way,” Müller interposed with some importance.

“And her carriage—such a story. She picked up the frightful old thing somewhere, put her man up behind in top hat and yellow boots, borrowed two old regimental hacks, and then drives herself, for our edification. You should see the springs give when the fat old thing sits there. The Colonel, of course, never dares to say a word even when she borrows a troop horse every day, though it is distinctly forbidden by the regulations. If any one else takes a liberty he is in for three days arrest and the Colonel thinks himself immense. He is a weak vessel, the Colonel, and he lies like print.

“He told a man I know how popular he

Life in a Garrison Town

is with the civilians, and how his tennis-court is always crowded. The truth is, he nearly always plays alone, for these people all steer clear of him if they can.

“I bet that the Colonel will join a service conference to the next meeting of the tennis club committee, and so we shall all be caught in the trap.”

During this conversation, Frau Leimann listened with sparkling eyes as Lieutenant Borgert picked to pieces the Colonel and the Starks in his usual spirited way, while Captain König pulled thoughtfully at his cigar and smothered a yawn, and his wife, lost in thought, played absently with a tassel of the table-cloth.

“Why so serious, dear lady?” and Borgert turned to her.

“I was wondering how you would talk about us if some day we should cease to be on good terms,” she said with a smile.

“But, gnädige Frau, how can you so doubt my good manners! Have you no confidence in me? Besides, how could I——”

He interrupted himself, for Frau Kahle had risen to take leave, and with her Lieutenant Pommer, whom she had asked to

Life in a Garrison Town

escort her as far as her house, since her husband was away on duty.

So the circle again grew smaller, and, as they sat down at the table, Borgert remarked:

“One might really offer a new dress to this Kahle, with her cobbler boy’s face. She never seems to have anything else to wear but that washed-out old rag.”

“You should see her in her own house,” Müller said with great scorn; “there she looks like a drab of a servant. She doesn’t even seem to have time to mend her dirty house-dress, and her boy tears about like a regular gutter-snipe out of the slums. Besides that, the rascal can already lie like fun!”

“An inheritance from his mother,” Borgert laughed, but a cold and reproachful glance from Frau König silenced him.

So the conversation gradually dropped off. The Captain yawned with more emphasis, and Lieutenant Leimann, all in a heap in an armchair, could only keep his eyes open with the greatest difficulty, while his wife was so unfeignedly bored that her face lost all its charm and beauty and she looked old and haggard. Müller was still occupied in

Life in a Garrison Town

digesting, and so it really did seem time to go home.

Amid lively expressions of gratitude for the delightful evening, they all separated, and Captain König accompanied his guests downstairs so as to bolt the front door after them.

When he returned to the sitting-room, he said to Frau Clara as he put out the gas, "A very interesting evening; but it would be well to beware of those two gentlemen."

CHAPTER II

“**H**ERE, you, Corporal Meyer, please to clear away the manure; it’s a disgraceful filth! What, the stable guard isn’t here? Then do it yourself. It won’t make you lose a pearl out of your crown! Hurry up, you! Then bring me the parole-book.”

“At your service, gnädige Frau.”

Frau Rittmeister Stark strode up and down the stable, followed by two huge rough dogs. She wore a very dirty, ill-fitting grey riding habit and a round hat. In her right hand she held a riding-whip, with which, every now and then, she gave a vicious cut at the air, which made the dogs creep behind her in terror.

She examined everything with sharp eyes, the straw, the slates with the horse’s name over each stall, and carefully studied the black board on which the day’s duties were written in chalk.

She paused behind two horses, the only ones left in the stable, and looked with angry eyes at the lean, badly-groomed beasts

Life in a Garrison Town

whose scraggy hips formed a sharp triangle with their cruppers.

She raised the hind foot of one gelding, took a note-book out of her pocket and wrote: "Remus No. 37 thrush, near fore-foot needs shoeing." Whereupon she climbed the ladder to the hay-loft. There lay two of the stable-guard sleeping sweetly, quite unconscious of the presence of the mother of the regiment. She bore down on the frightened men in a fury.

"You idle curs! Go to work, or I'll make it hot for you, you lazy scoundrels!" and they flew to the chaff-cutter as if the devil himself were behind them. Then she went down again to meet Corporal Meyer, who hurried towards her breathlessly, holding out the parole-book.

"Hold it while I read, if you please; you don't suppose I want to dirty my hands with the filthy cover? I see to-morrow is inspection of the saddlery. Is everything in order?"

"I will ask the Sergeant-Major."

"Hurry up, then! Fetch him! Run!"

The Sergeant-Major was anything but pleased to have his leisure disturbed, for the time when the squadron was out drilling

Life in a Garrison Town

was for him the pleasantest part of the day. He was sitting opposite his wife drinking a cup of coffee and comfortably smoking his morning cigar as Meyer delivered Frau Stark's command. He stamped his foot and he howled with rage.

“What does the old woman mean! Upon my word, she acts as if she were in command! It's scandalous to have to stand it, but if one don't there'll be the devil to pay with the Colonel; he dances to her piping!”

He sullenly buckled on his sword, flung his cap on his bald head, went grumbling downstairs, and lounged slowly across the barrack yard and confronted Frau Stark with a face on which was distinctly written: “You can go to the devil!”

She pounced on him at once.

“Is everything ready for to-morrow, Sergeant-Major?”

“I think so, but I'll see about it again to-night.”

“What — to-night? It is to be done at once; I'll soon put an end to your loafing! Besides, if you don't change your grumpy tones, I'll report you to the Colonel! Now fetch my horse!”

“It has been sent out for forage; all the

Life in a Garrison Town

horses have gone except these two lame ones."

"My horse sent out for forage? This is a new form of impertinence! Send for it at once, it won't hurt one of the corporals to walk!"

At the sounds of footsteps she turned, and, seeing Lieutenant Borgert, called to him in the sweetest tones.

"Surely, I am not mistaken, dear Lieutenant Borgert—it is you! How early you are on duty! I only came to bring my husband's horses some sugar, but they've already gone; my dear husband always starts so frightfully early in the morning."

"I really admire the interest you take in the squadron, gnädige Frau, and especially the way in which you give your orders in the stable."

"Orders? I don't give any orders. I only come once in a while to give the Sergeant-Major any instructions my husband may have forgotten. Still, one must take an interest in one's squadron."

"I see you are your husband's corporal, dear lady, but a corporal who commands the regiment. I congratulate you on your advancement!"

Life in a Garrison Town

“ Oh, you funny man ! How you do love a joke ! Shall we see you at the casino to-night ? ”

“ Certainly, gnädige Frau, for the Colonel has already ordered a service conference at five.”

“ To be sure — I had nearly forgotten. But that will not take long ; there are only a few unimportant matters.”

“ Then you know —— ”

“ Of course. One can't help being interested. I have brought several things to the Colonel's attention, which he may wish to discuss.”

“ I wonder what they can be ! But there is Captain König ; I must speak to him. Good morning.”

“ Adieu, dear Borgert, and *au revoir* ” — and she held up her hand to his mouth, in a dirty old riding-glove of her husband's.

As Frau Stark again turned to the Sergeant-Major, Borgert hurried after the Captain, who had just gone into the yard of the 3rd Squadron.

“ Good morning, Herr Rittmeister ! Do forgive me for troubling you, but a matter of the most vital importance compels me to ask a favour of you.”

Life in a Garrison Town

“Well, what is it?” the Captain demanded in some surprise. “Is it really so important?”

“I am sure that the Colonel will speak of the casino bills this afternoon, and it would be extremely painful for me should he mention my name before the junior officers.”

“But I cannot give you the money now; it was hard enough to scrape together the one hundred marks that I gave you last week.”

“But if, in spite of that, I urgently repeat my request, it is because I am in a very unfortunate position. If I cannot get four hundred marks by to-night it will be most annoying for me, and the consequences may be terrible.”

“That is all very well and good” — and König shrugged his shoulders; “but I have no money.”

For a moment they looked at each other in silence, then Borgert spoke, but with some hesitation:

“Might I be permitted to offer a suggestion, Herr Rittmeister?”

“And what may that be?”

“I beg you not to misunderstand what I

Life in a Garrison Town

am about to say. Could you not make use of the money in the squadron cash-box, seeing it is only for a short time?"

"But in Heaven's name, my dear fellow, what do you take me for? You don't expect me to embezzle the money in the cash-box?"

"But surely there would be no harm in it, Herr Rittmeister, for you alone have control of it, and it is no question of stealing, but simply of borrowing a sum that will be repaid almost at once?"

"No, no; I really cannot."

"Then there is nothing left for me to do!" Borgert cried in despair.

König, lost in thought, twisted his moustache. It might be wise to put this man under an obligation to himself. He had a crafty dangerous tongue, and his unbounded influence over the junior officers might be very harmful if it came to a quarrel. The beggarly four hundred marks were lying idle in his desk at home, so he could easily give them. But if Borgert could be made to believe that the money had been taken out of the regiment's cash-box, then the chances were that he would not borrow again for a time in face of the dangers and disreputable

Life in a Garrison Town

means taken to grant his request. So Captain König decided to lend Borgert the money out of his own pocket, but to let him believe it had been given him out of the squadron funds.

“Very well,” he said after a pause, “you shall have the money. By when will you be sure to repay it?”

“In ten days all will be plain sailing. My word on it.”

“Good. Then you can come to the office this afternoon.”

“My most grateful thanks, Herr Rittmeister.”

“Never mind, never mind; but I hope this will be the last time. Now I must hurry; the squadron is already off.”

He shook hands with Borgert, mounted his horse, and trotted out of the barrack yard.

Borgert, greatly relieved, hurried home with a joyful heart. He was not expected on duty till ten o'clock. He could have hugged the man. Such a decent chap, always ready to help a fellow out of a hole. Ten days was a long time. Something would be sure to turn up before then.

Leimann, in the meantime, was waiting

Life in a Garrison Town

impatiently in Borgert's room, but when he entered, radiant, his face cleared.

"Did he do it?" he called to his friend.

"Of course he did, without a word. Go to him at eleven o'clock. You have only two hundred marks left of the last money you borrowed. He'll do it. What is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander."

That afternoon, as the two friends sat together in the casino over a bottle of wine, it was easy to see by Leimann's boisterous hilarity that his request had not been in vain.

Punctually at five o'clock all the officers of the regiment in full uniform were assembled in the reading-room of the casino as the Colonel entered, wearing his official mien, and received from his officers the report "All present."

"Gentlemen," the autocrat began, "I have requested your presence this evening to discuss certain matters with you. First, I must beg you to wear dancing spurs at balls and similar functions, so as to avoid such unpleasant accidents as happened last night. A gentleman whose name I will not mention" — and he glared at Lieutenant von Meckelburg — "tore off with his spurs the entire

Life in a Garrison Town

hem from the dress of the wife of Herr Rittmeister Stark. This must not happen again, gentlemen, for, if it should, punishment will certainly follow. Further, it is not the custom among well-bred people for a gentleman to offer his hand first to a lady. Should, however, the lady offer her hand, then politeness requires him, in the circles in which we move, to kiss it. The complaints of a lady of the regiment prove that some of you gentlemen are still so backward in your education that this must be brought to your notice." This referred to Lieutenant Bleibtreu, who, unwilling to kiss Frau Stark's dirty dog-skin glove, which had been soaked by the rain, recently declined to perform this act of courtesy.

The Colonel continued, flicking away a tear: "Further, gentlemen, I forbid you to go to any other town without permission. Whoever wishes to go to even the nearest must ask for leave, even if it is only two minutes away. You all know that two gentlemen of this regiment had to send in their resignations under very distressing circumstances, as they had made the place too hot to hold them, and contracted debts that were appalling."

Life in a Garrison Town

“ May I be permitted to ask Colonel von Kronau a question ? ” Captain König interrupted.

“ Most certainly, Herr Rittmeister. ”

“ Does this regulation also affect the married officers and their presence at parties, theatres, and concerts ? ”

“ Of course ! I mean to have full control over you all, and know how often each of you leave the garrison ! Insubordination I shall punish according to the criminal code, not as mere neglect of duty, but as deliberate disobedience to orders ! ”

There was a pause, during which the Colonel took out his handkerchief and wiped his left eye.

As he looked about the circle to observe the effect of his words, he seemed to read in each face an expression of amazement and rebellion.

This, then, was the result. Because two empty-headed fools had broken bounds, all the rest of the officers were to be shut up in this beggarly hole ! Their only recreations, a concert or a glass of beer, were also about to be relegated to the pleasant might-have-beens ; for who would be willing to have every drop counted that he drank while

Life in a Garrison Town

there? Rather not go at all. Supposing a lady of the regiment should ask her husband to accompany her to the neighbouring town, shopping, everything there being cheaper and better, he would have to say, "I can't; I must ask permission, just as a school-boy asks his master if he wants to go out." That is the reward for being a Captain, and for fifteen years of service.

This was indeed a triumph for the Colonel, and a signal proof of his ability and smartness as a commanding officer. All that was now necessary was to be obliged to ask permission even to drink a glass of beer in one's own quarters. That might come later. The Colonel did not for a moment consider that he was giving his younger officers the opportunity of disobeying his orders when, duty over, they cast about for amusements not provided for in a garrison; rather he was convinced that he was the inventor of a new kind of discipline and means of enforcing military obedience.

"And now, gentlemen, as the year of office is over, we will ballot for a new director of the casino! You, Herr Rittmeister Kahle, held the position all last year, and I am glad to tell you that the way

Life in a Garrison Town

you performed your duties has won my entire approval. We all, gentlemen, owe a debt of gratitude to Captain Kahle for the way in which he has devoted his leisure time to improving the casino! He has increased our funds, and he has made many alterations and improvements. It seems to me, therefore, that we can do nothing better than urge Captain Kahle, in our own interest, to retain his position. Should anyone have any other suggestion, then we will ballot by slips."

The murmur of approval which followed the Colonel's words was something to which he was quite unaccustomed.

"I consider it unnecessary," he further continued, "to audit the accounts, for I am sure that I should find everything in the best order. But one thing more, gentlemen; I cannot allow you to run up your casino bills as you have done in the past. The two largest accounts were, to be sure, paid to-day, but if the rest are not paid by the first of the month, I shall take drastic measures against the offenders. Arrange accordingly. Thank you, gentlemen!"

Now then, you Lieutenants, it is high time for you to hurry up and run to some

Life in a Garrison Town

Jew or money-lender and borrow money, for each one of you owes at least a couple of hundred marks; nor can you repay in instalments out of your private allowance, or you will get such a black mark in your conduct report that will stick till you are old and decrepit. Nor can you escape again out of this dull hole; but don't, on that account, for goodness sake, venture to loaf any more of your time away at the casino, for that means bigger bills, and the end will be arrest!

In the meantime the ladies of the regiment and two or three civilians had assembled in the reading-room to discuss the principal event of the evening—namely, to choose a director for the tennis-club and to decide on regular days for playing in the casino garden.

Frau König was the only one absent and her husband had made some excuse for her, but indeed she avoided every opportunity of meeting the ladies of the regiment. She was never at her ease with them and loathed their empty, tiresome conversations about nothing at all. She was indeed quite out of place among them, and it was impossible for her to enjoy an intercourse based only

Life in a Garrison Town

on superficialities and strict etiquette. She particularly despised their way of greeting their friends with effusive cordiality, which changed to the most spiteful criticism as soon as their backs were turned. If she could not be honest and sincere in her opinions—and that might have been very dangerous—she preferred to remain shut up within her own four walls.

The discussion in the reading-room took a long time, for each lady had a cherished wish, and it required a good deal of eloquent urging on the part of the newly-elected director to induce the still hesitating gentlemen to join. It was expected that most of them would not play, for of course nobody had any intention of obliging the Colonel now, but, on the other hand, it helped to increase the membership fees.

At last the folding doors were opened into the dining-room, where a simple supper had been provided. The harsh voice of Frau von Kronau dominated the conversation, and groups of old and young men, gathered in corners, subjected the Colonel's latest regulations to a sharp criticism.

The Captains König and Hagemann were joking rather boisterously with Frau Stark,

Life in a Garrison Town

while Lieutenant Pommer devoted himself entirely to Frau Kahle and did not leave her side.

After supper most of the gentlemen were seized with an enthusiastic longing to escape from this tiresome meeting, to which they had been summoned on the false pretence of official business. Just then Frau Stark called out:

“How would it be, Herr Oberst, if we had a dance? I’m sure no one has anything else to do. It would be lovely, enchanting.”

The Colonel debated a moment, then he declared himself delighted. Any wish of Frau Stark’s was a command to him.

The gentlemen were furious. To dance in this heat—it was madness! It would be much wiser to sit in the shade of the verandah and drink beer. Lieutenant Specht was especially indignant, as he had promised to meet his lady-love at the railway-station at ten o’clock. He gave expression to his indignation when he turned to Borgert.

“The old screw is crazy with her dancing, but we will give her such a turn to-night that the perspiration will pour down her back.”

Everybody went for a stroll in the garden

Life in a Garrison Town

while the hall was being cleared and arranged for dancing. A faint crescent moon softly illumined the horizon, against which the spires and houses of the town stood out like ghostly silhouettes. In the fresh green of the hedge a nightingale trilled most divinely in the soft evening air, and in between could be heard the tones of the fiddles from the casino. A few broken chords from the organ of a "merry-go-round," cut and drowned by the wind, floated across the still night from the distant town. The peace and the quiet of the evening tempted to dreams and sadness. On the tennis-court Lieutenant Borgert occupied the time by giving the younger gentlemen an excellent imitation of the way in which Frau Stark played tennis, how she served and returned the balls, and the improvised entertainment was so successful that his audience held their sides with laughter.

Only when he caught sight of a white dress through the foliage at the foot of the garden did he end the performance.

Who was it? Was she alone? He must creep nearer and open his ears. Possibly it might be an interesting adventure. Cautiously and silently he hurried across the

Life in a Garrison Town

lawn and hid behind an elderberry bush. Only a few steps away stood Lieutenant Pommer with his arm about Frau Kahle's waist, whispering eagerly to her. It was a pity that they were whispering, still he could catch an occasional sentence.

“What does it matter, Grete? If he treats you so, then you have a right to do as you please. Besides, he is too stupid to notice anything! If you only knew how I love you, how I adore you!”

“If you really love me so much, then I cannot refuse; I so long to be happy again!”

Thereupon the fat lieutenant took the little woman in his clumsy arms and kissed her passionately. But she freed herself from his embrace and fled like a deer across the lawn towards the casino, through the open windows of which the waltz, “Over the Silver Waves,” fell across the soft May night. Pommer crept under the shadow of the trees towards the entrance gate, so that he should not be noticed. Thereupon Borgert deserted his honourable post, greatly pleased and satisfied.

The dance had become very lively. Frau Stark was most in request; she flew from

Life in a Garrison Town

one arm to the other and perspired like a soldier at drill. Lieutenant von Meckelburg was especially offered up as the favourite victim, but he was a shocking bad dancer, and he could not keep in step. When the fat lady pressed the little Baron to her mighty bosom, he quite disappeared in the folds of her black and yellow dress.

Finally she had to give up and sank gasping into the nearest chair, and wiped the big drops from her face with the back of her hand.

Lieutenant Specht was enjoying himself in his own way, dancing with bent knees in the fashion popular in low dancing-saloons. Borgert stood in a corner half leaning over Frau Leimann, who had sunk exhausted into a chair and who was fanning herself with her handkerchief. The Lieutenant's glances rested on the lovely curves of the white neck as it gleamed through the transparent embroidery, and he drank in greedily its faint perfume.

In the reading-room the orderlies filled and refilled the glasses with "May" punch, while at a round table a group of officers played "skat" for penny points.

Lieutenant Specht took the first oppor-

Life in a Garrison Town

tunity during the next waltz of making off, for it was high time for him to go to the station, and as it was too late to change his clothes he went in full uniform to meet his "lady." She was laden with small parcels of provisions, bought at her own expense as her contribution to the housekeeping.

In a corner of the sofa sat Lieutenant Bleibtreu, lost in thought. He smoked his cigar slowly and only half heard the jokes of the skat players. He was rather vexed, because Frau König, the only lady with whom he liked to talk, was not there; sometimes his thoughts flew back to his distant home, where the woods were now decked in all the glory of the young summer, and where he had spent so many a happy hour communing with nature and in the company of those who loved him.

How different it was here! Here were all sorts and conditions of men with whom one never became intimate, whose interests were all centred in superficial things or in amusements of a very questionable kind. Of course there was his profession and he was fond of it; still it was not enough to satisfy a man whose interests in life were not as narrow as those of most of his comrades.

Life in a Garrison Town

And now he would be expected to live here for years and years, away from everything that might bring variety into the routine of his life; among people intercourse with whom was strictly confined to the superficialities of "good form," and who were always on the watch for the weaknesses of their neighbours, which they considered fair game.

And is this the comradeship, the vaunted good fellowship of the German army? To live under similar conditions, always forced to be together and if possible to agree, required to treat each other with superficial courtesy at least, and always to be seen together on duty, at the casino and innumerable other places — that is what was understood by good comradeship.

But where was the intimate friendship, where the mutual interest? The constant endeavour to be helpful to one another, and never to be either malicious or envious? Alas, the beautiful word "comradeship" has indeed sunk to an empty phrase!

Of course here and there can be found some officers really united in the closest bonds of friendship, a friendship loyal and self-sacrificing; but two such comrades, com-

Life in a Garrison Town

rades in the noblest sense of the word, are very rare indeed, are very exceptional.

Of course if one is prosperous and all goes well then there are friends in plenty, and intercourse among comrades is delightful; there is a reciprocity of kindness, a drinking and frolicking together; there is a willingness to be of service to each other if it involves no risks, no bothers, no sacrifices.

But true comradeship means more than this!

Should a comrade fall into evil ways, or betray a lack of experience or good breeding offensive to others; or, if through ignorance, folly or lack of education he has done something wrong or blameworthy, he is, if at all, only brutally censured for his faults instead of a kind and friendly effort being made to point out to him his shortcomings, or to help his failings, or to compare his faults with one's own. Rather he is avoided as a man of no account and as one "who is not in it." Indeed, he is quite overlooked unless something can still be got out of the sinner, or if some talent or some other services rendered have made him popular.

A civilian is much better off. If he has found no true and loyal friend, he can, at

Life in a Garrison Town

least, live his own life without being perpetually forced to meet men at mess and countless other occasions with whom he has nothing in common. It is different in the service.

These were the thoughts that occupied Bleibtreu, when Captain König came into the room and sat down beside him on the sofa.

“And this is what people call amusement,” the Captain grumbled. “I dare say they’ll bore us often enough with such gaieties to make up for keeping us away from town. My wife will open her eyes when I tell her.”

“I agree with you, Herr Rittmeister; to-day’s regulation is simply abominable,” Bleibtreu exclaimed. “If the Colonel had only forbidden the younger officers to go, that would have been hard enough, but to include the married officers in the same category is an unwarranted and outrageous assumption of authority. Of course, he himself will ride over whenever he chooses.”

“Entertainments such as this might pass if they were arranged to please everybody or if agreed upon beforehand; but no—Madame Stark commands and we obey!

Life in a Garrison Town

If one of us should plead a prior engagement, the Colonel would make it hot for him to-morrow! We had a little example of it just now. One may not even drink what one chooses," the Captain continued. "The Colonel simply brews a punch and we have to pay the bill. The one to-night certainly cost six marks a head. How can he know that I don't prefer to drink one mark's worth, and that either beer or seltzer-water? Then, to cap the climax, he stands there and preaches to us about our casino debts."

"You are right; but all the same it would be well if some of us were less extravagant, such as Borgert and several others. It is a pity that hardly a third of these men know how to keep their accounts," Bleibtreu replied.

"Yes, that is the cancer which is eating into our military system. The number of officers ruined by debt passes belief," said Captain König. "And what is the reason? Why can young men in other positions in life live more economically? In the first place, because they are not forced to associate with people who are better off than themselves. If a man has no money, he stretches himself according to his cloth and

Life in a Garrison Town

makes himself quite comfortable. But in the casino the millionaire and the pauper sit side by side. It is easy enough to say that the wealthy officers should live in ratio to the means of their poorer comrades. But it is impossible to expect a millionaire to drink water at dinner, and to give up a sumptuous establishment, horses and carriages for the sake of a comrade with an extra monthly allowance of only fifty marks. In the long run, the poor man will get dissatisfied with his own modest way of living when he sees his more fortunate comrades rioting on the fat of the land, and the result is that he follows their example. Money is not needed at once; his uniform helps him to unlimited credit. But the misery begins when the time for repayment comes. Unless a guardian angel in the shape of a Jew or money-lender rescues him, he is done for. In the despairing effort to get money, how many a shady trick is resorted to! Possibly the father scrapes together his last pennies and sacrifices his evening smoke to keep his lad above water. Should the youngster be so lucky as to emerge safely from his first scrape, he soon begins again in the fond belief that he will be equally lucky the next time."

Life in a Garrison Town

“But that cannot be helped,” Bleibtreu interposed; “each is, after all, responsible for himself.”

“Not helped!” Captain König exclaimed. “Of course it can be helped! It would be quite sufficient to make a law that no officer under the rank of Captain can be sued for debt. I rather think the tradespeople would be mighty careful not to risk giving credit at a venture to a Lieutenant of twenty-three, with whose means they are totally unacquainted. They would not lend a hundred marks to a civilian three times as well off without careful inquiries as to who and what he is and his standing. The result of the present system is that the officers are the prey of the tradespeople, who know that they are sure to get their money in most cases, or they can ruin their debtor.”

“It seems to me that an officer’s exceptional social position obliges him to live so extravagantly, and for that reason, I think, all men of moderate means should be excluded,” said Lieutenant Bleibtreu.

“That is exaggerating,” said Captain König, “and yet energetic measures are required to put a stop to this ruinous extravagance. Of course it is well and kindly

Life in a Garrison Town

meant when the order reads: 'The more extravagance and luxury an officer sees about him, the more simply he should wish to live.' A pious motto never to be fulfilled, for it is evident if the officer sees the increasing extravagance of other classes he thinks it due to his prominent social position to equal, if not to exceed, it. He believes himself vastly superior to anyone else, and even a Lieutenant will look with the greatest contempt, or at least with a compassionate smile, at the man who by the labour of his hands or his intellectual achievements has been of use to the world.

"This self-conceit is the curse of our profession and likely to alienate from each other, more and more, the people and the officers of the army, while the contrary is earnestly to be desired. And it is to officers such as these that the people are compelled to confide their sons to be trained. But if their trust in them is shaken more and more, then will the people's love for a soldier's life and the patriotism which go hand in hand gradually die.

"The officer should be given more intellectual employment, so that it may be apparent to him in what he is deficient com-

Life in a Garrison Town

pared to men in other professions — so that he may learn the value of their services to the State; then, perhaps, he will begin to appreciate his privileges and prerogatives, which no one grudges him, instead of finding in these a reason for intolerable arrogance. This leads to other troubles, and is the reason why so many officers see in their soldiers, not their comrades nor the future defenders of their country, whom they should help, but rather the objects of never-ending trouble and ceaseless irritation. This results in yet another evil.

“The young man of twenty feels his superior’s hostility with silent resentment. Gradually he loses his pride in his gay uniform, especially if his superiors make unreasonable demands on him, or if they treat him unjustly. Of course while he is in power of the military authorities he will be exceedingly careful how he expresses his opinions, but no sooner has he freed himself from the military yoke, than a leaning towards socialism, possibly in-born, will undoubtedly grow with redoubled strength, especially after the experiences he has been through while in the army. And it is indeed very grave if what should be the most important factor with

Life in a Garrison Town

which to combat the gigantic growth of socialism, namely, the military training-time of young and impressionable men, easily taught and influenced, should be made the means to recruit the ranks of the enemy; and this will happen inevitably if such officers are permitted to be military trainers.”

“ May this not be only a passing phase from which our superior military class is suffering? ”

“ No, that is the tragedy of it — it is a deep-rooted cancer. But even this might be controlled and possibly destroyed if one could go seriously to work, instead of arrogantly believing that German officers stand at the head of all and need no reform. There is still time to help, for these critical conditions have not yet taken a form impossible to overcome; in spite of everything we still have a record of a glorious past, and the fame of our army is great in foreign countries. But we must strike while the iron is hot. An army is created for war and it is inevitable that it must suffer under thirty years of peace. But we need no war to eradicate this evil, but we do need prudent, level-headed men, who will frankly confess that ‘ there is something rotten in the state of Denmark. ’ ”

Life in a Garrison Town

König had talked himself into a great heat. He took a long pull at the beer glass which the orderly had just brought him, for he refused to drink punch, thus defying the Colonel. Occasionally he needed to let himself go, just to shake off his worries; that done he felt relieved.

Borgert had been standing within earshot paying close attention to what the Captain said; whenever two people chatted together he was sure to be in the background. Secretly he was much amused at these two croakers, who did not appreciate the advantages offered. Why did they not think as he did? Enjoy life as it came and good times as they turned up. That was his motto in life, and for that reason the champagne, for which he never paid, tasted so good. He liked living in this dull hole, where there was always a little scandal brewing, an attraction sadly lacking in his last garrison town. When his taste for that kind of amusement was discovered there he was hastily ordered to the frontier for the good and welfare of his comrades. With half-closed eyes and a thoughtful face he stood leaning against the doorpost. All at once he looked attentively about him. Where was that fat Pommer?

Life in a Garrison Town

He had only just seen him stumbling about half tipsy among the ladies, and now he was gone. And Frau Kahle? Sure enough! Also gone. Now for a game of hide-and-seek; possibly it might lead to something enormously funny. So he crept cautiously into the garden, laying aside his cigar for fear it might betray him. The moon had discreetly sunk towards the horizon so as not to be an unwilling witness of what was taking place among the beeches at the foot of the garden. Her faint rays barely touched the masses of clouds that floated across her hiding-place.

And so it was! There they were, on the wooden seat under the garden wall, clasped in a passionate embrace. The nightingale still sang, but farther away. Pommer was uttering confused phrases without troubling himself as to whether he was overheard. Frau Kahle with her head on his shoulder drank in the words of love which she had not heard since the first year of her married life, while Lieutenant Pommer occasionally pressed a kiss on her mouth and hands. His right arm clasped her slender waist and one big hand rested on her throbbing breast.

“Dear, darling Grete, you really must get

Life in a Garrison Town

rid of this man. He is a tyrant, and he has no feeling whatever. Besides, he is altogether too big for you!”

“He is a good fellow, but he doesn’t understand me. I must have someone who understands me and who really loves me. It will be so sweet to pet you when you come home tired out from duty. I shall be so good to you!”

“How I love you, you dear little rogue!”

“And how I love you, dear Hans! You cannot imagine how hurt I was last year when my husband flirted with the magistrate’s wife, a woman who was neither young nor pretty. He even ran after the old midwife, whom he did not recognise because she had a shawl over her head. She let him follow her into the house, and then she quietly took off her shawl and said, ‘So, sir, now I shall tell your wife what kind of a fellow you are.’ And so she did.”

“It is too much for you to bear, Grete, really it is.” And as he spoke he embraced her with such passion that she gave a little cry of pain.

Just then someone shouted his name from the casino; he was wanted.

Fearing to be discovered in his honour-

Life in a Garrison Town

able position as spy should they rise, Borgert walked straight up to the disconcerted pair.

“ Good heavens, how you frightened me ! But, pardon, I don't wish to intrude.” And he walked hurriedly away towards the casino.

Of course no one suspected the reason for the change in Borgert's face. His bored expression had given way to one of sly and cynical amusement.

Now he knew enough, and so he could devote a little time to dancing. After all it was a delight to hold in his arms so beautiful a creature as Frau Leimann. She was worth committing a sin for.

The gaieties were nearing their end ; the ladies were tired, and Frau Stark especially had been danced nearly to death. Even the Colonel's wife had had quite enough, and was silent — an unusual state for her.

Suddenly Frau Leimann complained of headache and asked Borgert to take her home, for her husband had reached the maudlin stage — his usual condition after too much punch — and was reeling about the garden, sobbing and weeping most dolefully.

Life in a Garrison Town

The gentlemen had nearly all succumbed to the influence of the "May" punch, and they had become very noisy and coarse in their jokes. It was high time to separate, so they climbed into the carriages that had been waiting at the casino gate for a couple of hours.

A few pet names and thumps were required to rouse the sleeping coachmen, who were tired out from the exhaustion of the morning's drill.

• • • • •
About ten o'clock the next morning the fat Pommer was still in bed. He should have been on duty, but he had overslept himself; and, seeing that it was now too late, he turned over and again began to snore.

When he at last woke at eleven o'clock he stared stupidly before him, then his hand, which a few hours ago had so tenderly clasped Frau Grete's, clutched his tangled hair.

Thunder, how his head ached! What had happened? Yes, now he remembered — that confounded punch of last night!

But there was something more! A white dress was interwoven in his recollections,

Life in a Garrison Town

and very vaguely and slowly he began to remember what had happened. He looked at the clock. What, past eleven already?

With trouble and groans he crept out of bed and slipped on his trousers and made some kind of a toilet. It was all one to him, for his head ached fit to split, and then there was always the thought of what had happened yesterday. It was unbearable! In a very bad temper he flung himself into a chair, and, when his servant brought in his coffee and let a spoon fall, he turned on him in a fury.

“You infernal ass, don’t make such a clatter, or I’ll kick you out of the room!”

With a great effort Pommer tried to recall the events of yesterday, and the more vivid they became the more he was horrified at his own conduct.

What had he done? He had made love to the wife of a comrade — he whose views and principles had always been so rigid that he was, perhaps, the only one among his comrades whose most cutting reproofs were endured, for they all knew that he not only preached, but practised what he preached. He recalled his past. Was there in it either spot or stain? No, no; the

Life in a Garrison Town

years that were gone lay pure and unblemished before him, and now that he had passed the dangers and follies of youth, he was burdened with a heavy sin — he had wronged his comrade's wife. Shame!

But had she not told him herself that she was unhappy, that her husband ill-treated her? Was that not an excuse, possibly even a justification?

No — and again, no! He had grievously sinned against a man's most sacred rights. The blood rushed to his head, and the room seemed whirling round. If he could die, only die, now that he had proved himself false to all that was best within him, and burdened his conscience with a crime from which he could never escape!

What had happened that he could so far have forgotten himself? It was all owing to the champagne he had drunk in the morning with Borgert, empty-headed tippler that he was. Then there was the "Türkenblut," that horrible mixture which Müller had stood at mess because he had lost a bet, followed at night by that cursed punch; and altogether it made him, who rarely drank a glass of wine, lose his head. The others, the contemptible scoundrels, when they noticed this,

Life in a Garrison Town

had given him more and more to drink, probably because his drunkenness amused them.

Of course he liked the pretty little woman. She was just to his taste — so soft, so charming, so yielding. Big, strong men often fall in love with little women, but to do what he had done last night had never entered his head before; he must have been mad. He would go to her and implore her to forgive him; he would honestly and frankly confess his sin — it might lessen his guilt if it could not efface it.

Just then someone knocked at the door. As if he expected Nemesis herself to enter, he shrunk back in his chair and muttered faintly, "Come in."

Lieutenant Borgert crossed the threshold helmet in hand. He seemed surprised to find his comrade in such a condition and he took his measure with a sharp glance.

"Excuse me if I disturb you; but I have come to speak to you about a rather painful matter."

"Official or private?" Pommer growled.

"Both; just as you take it," Borgert replied insolently.

"I am not in a mood just now for private

Life in a Garrison Town

matters. Kindly put it off till some other time?"

"Sorry, but I want it settled now. You know very well that as your senior in length of service I have the right to demand an explanation from you of anything I see fit."

Pommer sat lost in thought for a moment. Before he entered the army he had spent three years at the University, and after that he had been employed in several great banking houses, and now he who had seen life from its most serious aspects, whose experience was double that of other men of his age, was obliged to justify his conduct to a man who did nothing but drink, carouse and squander money, and who in the service was beneath contempt. Yet the man had the power to make him; a military regulation gave him the right.

Yes, so it was, and now he remembered how the question of this same foolish privilege had been the subject of serious thought, how he had recognised the possibilities of its abuse by anyone who might wish to injure a junior comrade powerless to defend himself. Anyone could play the part of superior officer if he chose to. It was magnificent, truly!

Life in a Garrison Town

A grim and cynical smile crossed Pommer's pale face ; but he spoke with a steady voice :

“ Very well, then — what do you wish ? ”

“ I was in the garden last night by accident, and there I saw something which I do not understand even now. I saw you —— ”

“ Yes, I kissed a lady, the wife of Captain Kahle, and made love to her — I know that. ”

“ Will you be so kind as to explain to me how that happened ? ”

“ I was drunk, or it certainly would not have happened. ”

“ Well, your explanation is short and simple enough. But why do you drink too much if you can stand so little and lose your self-control ? ”

“ If I was drunk I was not alone to blame ; there were others —— ”

Borgert interrupted for fear of hearing something that might sound like a reproach.

“ You do not seem to realise the gravity of the situation, ” he said ironically. “ Therefore I should like to point it out to you. ”

“ I don't require your explanation. I myself know what I —— ”

“ Pardon me, but I insist on speaking, my

Life in a Garrison Town

dear sir. I cannot allow you to correct me, for I have come here to set you right."

Pommer was about to retort in a passion, but the other's icy glance and cutting tones silenced him.

"What you have done is the gravest crime against a friend that I know. To make love to the wife of a comrade is to commit an act of disloyalty, is indeed a crime which deserves the most condign punishment. How would you act should you find your wife in the arms of another man? Kill him at once, of course, or you would challenge him to fight to the death. But you — you have dared to make love to a married woman. You have violated the holy of holies, which should be to us a *noli me tangere*. A mere clasp of the hand, a glance in such a case means dishonour; yes, even the secret longing to kiss and possess the wife of another. Do you still dare to look in the face of the man you have so shamefully wronged and deceived? I could not! I would go to him at once, confess my guilt, and offer him satisfaction. I never would have believed you capable of so dastardly an act. Are you not ashamed of yourself to the very depths of your soul? I have no wish to plunge

Life in a Garrison Town

you into misery, and this shall go no farther, or you would be ruined. Not only would it be a question of your career, but of your life. But I shall expect you to go to the lady this very day and beg her pardon, and you must also tell her what I have done for you.”

Borgert drew himself triumphantly up to his full height and looked down at the miserable Pommer, on whose face the first expression of rebellion had gradually given way to one of silent submission and conscious guilt.

The big stout man had shrunk together more and more in his chair, and his eyes stared lifelessly before him on the floor.

Two great tears stood in his eyes. The man was weeping. Was it because his guilt lay heavy on his conscience, or because he might possibly still have to face the pistol of the injured husband? No; he had sinned, but he was manly enough not to fear the consequences. He was no coward.

But he was ashamed, and it is this feeling of shame which lowers a man most irretrievably in his own estimation.

At the same time he was conscious of a warm feeling of gratitude towards the man who, though he had been a witness of his guilt, was now magnanimous enough only

Life in a Garrison Town

to point out to him the wrong he had done, instead of surrendering him to the bullet of an injured husband. And all that he had said, was it not just?

Borgert now rose and silently held out his hand to Pommer and looked him steadily in the face, but Pommer's eyes avoided his as Borgert said very kindly :

“There, now, take comfort! Make amends for what you have done, and be careful in future.”

“Thank you,” Pommer murmured brokenly, his voice choked by tears. “You have given me your word of honour that this shall go no farther — not for my own sake, but for the lady's, who must not be talked about?”

“I have given you my word — I shall be silent.”

As the Lieutenant crossed the threshold, Pommer followed him with grateful eyes, and thought that this was indeed a friend to whom he owed his life.

That magnanimous hero was well satisfied with his mission. It was an affair that just suited him. There was no risk; on the contrary, he played the part of a guardian angel bringing forgiveness to the sinner, and leading him back to the paths of virtue. It

Life in a Garrison Town

was, besides, a most entertaining comedy to see a comrade at his feet, who had always been every inch a man, and whom scandal had never touched. It was a lucky chance, too, that he could now make use of Pommer's undoubted influence over the younger officers. Finally, there was the further piquancy of humiliating Frau Kahle, and of asking her how the affair had ended. He had no intention of sparing her, and he looked forward with delight to seeing the little woman on her knees before him, imploring him not to betray her.

As Borgert entered his house he hummed a lively song. Giving his man his sword, cloak and helmet, he went upstairs to the Leimanns.

He did not find them alone. The Adjutant was there; he had left the office at 11.30, as the Colonel had gone hunting. Frau Leimann also came in just then, and, as the two gentlemen were busy looking out of the window watching Frau König ride past with Lieutenant Bleibtreu, Borgert seized both her hands and covered them with passionate kisses.

Then in his own witty way he described and acted for them, with wonderfully comic

Life in a Garrison Town

gestures, his adventure of the morning, until they were convulsed with laughter.

In the meantime, Pommer sat at his writing-table and tried to relieve his heavy heart in a long letter to his mother. He sang the praises of his new friend and he extolled rather extravagantly the nobility of his thoughts and conduct.

He had grown calmer. He still viewed the events of the preceding evening in the same light, but he judged them from the point of view of a man who knows that, though he has been guilty of a bad action, it was rather the result of an unlucky chance than of innate vice.

About noon he finished dressing himself so as to call on Frau Kahle, as at this time her husband was usually away from home. The latter might possibly be indifferent as to what a stranger had to do with his wife, still there was no knowing, and it would be better so.

With a sense of unspeakable remorse and shame, he mounted the carpeted stairs that led to Frau Kahle's apartments, and he had not long to wait before he was admitted.

With a faint cry she hurried towards him, flung her arms about his neck, and in spite

Life in a Garrison Town

of his struggles kissed him passionately on the mouth.

“How I thank you for coming! The time seemed so long without you. Now that I have you I am happy again! My husband will be away till evening. Stay with me, Hans; I cannot live without you.”

As she spoke she drew him down beside her on the sofa and silenced him with burning kisses.

“I did not sleep all night long,” she whispered; “I could not realise my own happiness; I thought it must be a dream that I had found in you one I have a right to love and who loves me. I am so grateful to you, my only love.”

Lieutenant Pommer sat as if turned to stone. He did not utter a word and silently endured her caresses.

Why had he come? Where were his good resolutions? To make amends for the wrong he had done, to express his remorse, to confess that all was but the result of a moment of drunken passion!

But now it was impossible. How could he brutally waken this loving woman out of her dream? That which honour had

Life in a Garrison Town

demanded was now impossible in the face of a passion he had himself kindled in her heart. No; rather die than confess that it had all been a lie, deception, and the caprice of a moment. It was not in him to return this ardent love with such a blow.

And as in an abandonment of love she leaned her head on his breast, his heart throbbed as if it would burst, and a sudden change came over him. The strong resolute man had become the victim of a mighty power — love.

His glances rested on the woman he held in his arms. The soft folds of the transparent house-dress she wore revealed the curves of her round figure, the perfume of her bare white arms from which the lace sleeves had fallen bewildered and stunned him and robbed him of the last vestige of resolution and self-control. With a gesture of savage passion he flung his arms about her trembling form.

It was already evening when Pommer closed behind him the door of the house in which Frau Kahle lived.

With a haggard face and uncertain glance he went along the street, overlooking even

Life in a Garrison Town

the soldiers who passed and saluted him according to custom. He would have passed by Lieutenant Borgert had the latter not shouted a greeting to him across the street and startled him out of his thoughts.

He hesitated, stood still, then looked absently at his comrade, who crossed the road towards him.

“And how are you now, my dear Pommer? Quite recovered from your spree?”

“Thanks, thanks, I am all right, quite well. And — yes — I want to tell you — I have been there.”

“Been to see her? That is right. Everything settled?”

“Of course, naturally. Quite smooth. Everything in the best order.”

“Well, then, good-bye! I must be off.”

“Good-bye. Again my best thanks.”

“But, my dear fellow, it was gladly done. You saw I meant well by you.”

“Yes; let us be good friends.”

When Pommer reached home he was in despair. What had he done?

Instead of atoning for his guilt of yesterday by a full confession, he had sunk still deeper in the mire. He had followed his first transgression by a terrible crime, instead

Life in a Garrison Town

of struggling with all his might against his own weakness. More than that, he had deceived his friend and betrayed his trust. Thus had he repaid him for his goodness and generosity.

Now it was too late. There was no escape for him from the bonds of falsehood and sin. Whatever the end, he must follow the path he had chosen. He tried to excuse himself to his own conscience; chance had broken his will, and so he had fallen.

Weeks and months had passed. The lovers met often, and took long walks in the country together or met "accidentally" in the street, or wiled away, when the husband was absent from home, many a sweet and stolen hour in Frau Grete's boudoir.

Pommer's attachment to the unprincipled woman had at first completely placed him at her mercy. But the attraction had been merely sensual, and he found it impossible to feel a deep and lasting affection for one whose easy morals and perfect indifference to her duties as a wife and a mother, and whose abandonment of herself to the first-comer who told her that he loved her, had taught him her worthlessness; and so the

Life in a Garrison Town

time came when he began to tire of the passionate, hysterical woman. The true feeling that might have given their intimacy some moral support was lacking. Men are easily satiated by pleasures that become monotonous; only the happiness that is deep-rooted in the heart is lasting. So the first liking was followed in time by active aversion; he felt an increasing disgust and dislike towards the woman who, day by day, lost more and more of her value and betrayed more and more her lack of all true womanly feeling, until at last she ceased to be for him anything more than the female offered by Nature to the male.

The more this feeling increased, the more trifling seemed the fault which he had once considered his dishonour and the sin which had formerly burdened his conscience.

But he had not the heart to confess that he was tired of her, and that her charms had ceased to attract him; to do so seemed to him unmanly and ungrateful, for, after all, she had given him many happy hours.

He would not write, considering it too dangerous, for should his letter fall by accident into the hands of the unsuspecting husband, there might be a tragic ending

Life in a Garrison Town

to the story even now. She was not worth it.

Could Pommer have read Frau Grete's secret thoughts, had he known more of women, he would have recognised at once that only a word was needed to put an end to it all, for she also had long ceased to find any pleasure in the love of a man who seemed to her too pedantic, too awkward and too ungainly, to whom compliments were an effort and who would not make love without incitement.

She demanded a stormy, passionate, self-abandonment without perpetual scruples about right and wrong! The man to whom she gave her love must drink the overflowing cup to the dregs and then demand it again and again!

When the news was brought to Pommer one day that he had been transferred to another garrison with the advancement to the rank of First Lieutenant, it cost him no pang to take leave of Frau Kahle.

"I am going away," he said coldly, "and we shall probably never see each other again."

With a cry she fell on the couch and lay as if crushed.

Life in a Garrison Town

Whereupon Pommer opened the door noiselessly and disappeared. As for Frau Kahle she watched him from the window, and when he had turned the corner she flung open the piano and played a rattling, joyous waltz of Strauss. As, however, it occurred to her that she might be considered unfeeling if she took the separation so lightly, she wrote a long letter of eight pages to Lieutenant Borgert in which she gave passionate expression to the grief and wrongs of a forsaken woman.

So full were her words of a deep, unutterable grief, so touching was her despair at the loss of her lover, that no one could dream she was only playing a part, like Ophelia or Desdemona, with consummate skill.

When Borgert read the letter that night to the assembled officers in the casino there was a silent expression of respectful sympathy.

Suddenly one among them with a sly and comprehensive smile cried :

“ Bosh ! ”

Did he know from experience ?

CHAPTER III

SERGEANT-MAJOR ROTH was sitting late one autumn afternoon with Sergeant Schmitz at a coffee-table in his cosily heated parlour.

The room on the first floor of the barracks presented at first sight an appearance of luxury, and one could almost fancy that some member of the "Upper Ten" had pitched his tent here, till on nearer view the decorations proved to be mostly shoddy and pretentious, revealing in their cheap splendour that striving after an effect of style which is really best attained by simplicity.

The green and blue coloured wall-paper was in places completely hidden by huge pictures in heavy oak and gilt frames. A reproduction of Lenbach's "Prince Bismarck" hung over the red plush sofa, and to right and left of it two portraits of horses painted in oils. Against the opposite wall stood a piano of imitation ebony with silver candle-sconces, though neither the Sergeant-

Life in a Garrison Town

Major nor his wife, who had been a shop-girl, could play. A history was attached to this piano on which one of the younger non-commissioned officers of the regiment regularly every Sunday thumped out the "Blue Danube Waltz" with a monotonous accompaniment of chords. The eye of its owner never rested on it without a certain fierce resentment against the innocent "wire machine." In the first year of their married life Frau Sergeant had complained bitterly of not having a grand piano or even a cottage piano to call her own, especially as their colleagues of the second squad possessed an instrument. She deplored the lack of this hall mark of gentility all the more, because she had frequently boasted of having taken lessons in her youth.

Roth used to talk big to the one-year volunteers of the squadron of his wife's musical talents, and never failed to lay stress on the fact that these were becoming sadly rusty, because he had not the means to provide her with a pianette. Therefore he was hardly surprised when one day the black "caterwauling case" as he dubbed it, facetiously, appeared in his salon with an epistolatory dedication from its generous

Life in a Garrison Town

donors. But when the time came for the one-year volunteers to get their discharge, a van drove up to the horrified Sergeant's door to take the piano away again; for it had only been hired for six months. Rather than be the object of his comrades' scorn and derision, and in compliance with his wife's entreaties, Roth consented to purchase the piano by monthly instalments of 10 marks. The luckless piano stood thus unused against the wall, while the bill, a long way from being paid off, swallowed every first of the month a precious 10 mark gold-piece. Hence the Sergeant-Major's ire at the presence of this useless ornament to his quarters. Above the piano rioted an enormous lithograph of Vernet's well-known "Funeral Feasts," in a heavy brocade frame to the corners of which trumpety Japanese fans were fastened.

A mahogany what-not stood near the piano with six green wine glasses; this time a present paid for in hard cash by former one-yearers. There was also a heavy oak writing-table, on the corner of which stood a birdcage filled with yellow feathered occupants; whereas a ruler, a massive inkstand composed of stagshorn bars, a penholder and

Life in a Garrison Town

blotting-book represented the usual equipment of this article of furniture. A life-size picture of the Kaiser hung over the writing-table. It was surrounded by antlers, and beneath it were a pair of crossed sabres and a cuckoo clock. In the window stood a large table of flowers which on close inspection proved to be blossoms not produced by a hot-house, but by the scissors of an expert artificial flower manufacturer.

The floor was covered with two white fur rugs, three pieces of carpet as well as a genuine tiger-skin underneath the sofa table, on which was a plush tablecloth with great tassels almost sweeping the ground.

The prospect from the two windows, which looked east and were draped with ponderous curtains, was to-day one of masses of dark cloud scudding across the sky, a uniformly colourless sea, and occasional showers of cold drenching rain or hail, that, driven before the howling wind, swept over the town and desolate fields like monstrous waves.

With the rain beating against the panes and the wind whistling in the stove pipe, the comfortable warmth of the room was all the more to be appreciated, and the comrades

Life in a Garrison Town

to be pitied who were on duty out of doors.

This was the time when every year the regiment brought its Reservists under shelter in the huts at the back of the barracks. In dogs' weather such as this it was not pleasant to be obliged to hang about the parade-ground, and the recruiting sergeants were objects of envy, because they were allowed to hold their drill in the stable or to give their instructions in theory in the barrack-rooms.

The Reserve had its advantages — you got additional pay, and Roth, who was attached to the first division of the Reserve, was well satisfied. Further you met amongst them now and then old acquaintances, earlier one-year volunteers who when in the Reserve kept mostly open purse, if by so doing they could get their duty lightened.

Schmitz was forage-master to the fourth squadron, and likewise told off to the Reserve. Anyone who wished to be convinced of the excellent manner in which he filled his post, had only to cast a glance at the horses and see how their coats shone, and how plump and clean they stood in their straw. The stable itself was a model of cleanliness; not a

Life in a Garrison Town

single wisp of hay straggled out of the mangers on to the clean scoured dam, while the walls were newly whitewashed, and the windows bright and clear.

When Schmitz passed up the stable between the rows of horses it was amusing to see how all the animals instantly knew his step and voice, how they turned their heads towards him and neighed softly, as he called one or other of his favourites. There was "Klärchen," a charming little chestnut, who followed him about like a dog, and always put her nose in his pocket to sniff for sugar. She would stand on her hind legs and beg with one uplifted fore-foot. Then there was the "grandmother," an old horse with coal-black glossy hair, who because of its age was everyone's pet, and often plied with dainties.

But the special pride were the twelve Chinese. They had taken part in the Asiatic campaign, and had then been incorporated with the regiment. Beautiful horses they were, with splendid coats and powerful haunches, though not all of them were so big as "Pecho," "Wei" and "Kwang-su."

The two friends still sat chatting over the coffee-cups when Frau Roth came in. She was a brunette of medium height with little

Life in a Garrison Town

eyes and beaked nose. Her face resembled a bird's, though the wavy chestnut brown hair lent a certain charm to a head that was not beautiful. She carried a tray covered with an embroidered serviette on which stood a bottle of Moselle, three glasses and a box of cigars.

"By Jove, Roth, this is a ripping blow-out and no mistake!" exclaimed Schmitz in astonishment.

"One can only have a birthday once a year," said Roth, "so one ought to make the most of it. Fill up, old woman."

Frau Roth obeyed till the glasses were full to the brim and nearly overflowed. With a jovial "Here's to you," all at one draught drained the sparkling fluid. Then they raised their glasses once more, and clinked them, looking into each other's eyes. This ceremony they had copied from their superior officers. Both men lit a cigar which in honour of the day wore a label, and filled their glasses anew. There was still an hour before the evening duty in the stable. Earlier there was nothing to do, because Lieutenant Specht, who commanded the Reserve squadron, never came on duty of an afternoon, so they might enjoy themselves in peace.

Life in a Garrison Town

“Do you spend Christmas on leave?” Roth inquired of his friend.

“Don’t know yet,” Schmitz answered, shrugging his shoulders. “I should like to, for it is getting on for two years now since I was out of this beastly hole. But it takes forty-eight hours to get home from this outlandish place, and if you take four days out of the six for travelling the game is scarcely worth the candle. Besides it’s a cursed expensive trip.”

“What does it cost?”

“About 30 marks, and I haven’t got it to spare.”

Roth smiled contemptuously.

“So it’s a few shekels that you let stand in your way. I call that shabby.”

“Shekels are nothing to you, of course. But to me who have none it’s different.”

“Can I oblige you with a trifle?”

“I say, old man, have you won a lottery prize? You have been living like a fighting-cock lately, taking the train into the town every day and smoking twopenny cigars, and now you offer to lend! You must have come in for a fortune.”

“If I have, no one has kicked the bucket and left it to me,” Roth said, laughing

Life in a Garrison Town

boisterously. "The great thing in this life is to look out for what comes in one's way."

"Have you got on the blind side of a Jew?"

"Not exactly."

"What do you mean then? Give me the tip."

Roth winked at his wife and then at Schmitz. It would not do for his wife to hear, but directly she rose to fetch another bottle of wine, Roth began in a whisper.

"I can tell you, but," he laid his finger significantly on his mouth, "no blabbing."

"Trust me. I am not the man to split on you."

"You know I have got the second Reserve at present. Last time most of them were old one-yearers — rich young farmers and the like. You remember the fat young shopkeeping swine, and Rosbach, who had a dozen horses in the stable at home, and Scheller, the petticoat hunter, and the rest of that lot? The fellows don't know what to do with all their money. So Devil take me, think. I, when I give them out their uniform and pay, if it matters to them about a scurvy groschen or two! As to Scheller I

Life in a Garrison Town

reaped a little harvest through him into the bargain. The night before they were discharged I go round and look into matters to see that all is in order, and there if I did not find my gallant gentleman in company with a woman! I was just going to let out when he says in my ear, ‘Mum’s the word, Sergeant!’ Well, then I hold my tongue, and the next day at noon the blue corner of a banknote was sticking out of my cloak.”

“Lord, man! How do you do the trick? What if some of them should give you away later?”

“Not one of ’em will breathe a word. They are only too glad to shake the dust of the barracks off their feet.”

“Hum! I should be afraid of a row if I were you.”

“But there’s no chance of it. Just now I have another lot of fat creatures on hand. The wealthy butcher’s son from Brunswick, and a couple of brothers stinking of money, I can tell you. Shall I be fool enough to pay them the few paltry marks to waste on drink? No, not I! I take care of them myself. So, *prost!*”

The glasses clinked merrily and the next moment were empty again.

Life in a Garrison Town

“How do you like this stuff? Cost three marks the bottle.”

“Damned dear! Where does it come from?”

“Part of last year’s spoils. You remember the one-year man Rosner? His getting rank as non-commissioned officer seemed to hang fire, so I interfered, and interested myself with the chief a little on his behalf, and he got his gold lace. Sent me a case of wine in return. Decent chap, eh?”

“Rather!”

“You see, old man, there’s nothing like being practical. Up till last year, as you know, I was in charge of the commissariat. The butcher gave no end of trouble, and said in answer to complaints that he must send bones or there couldn’t be fair weight. Now and then the meat was beastly bad, often too fat or too stringy. When at last I fumed about it and threatened to report him, he said, ‘Don’t split, Sergeant, and I’ll never forget it of you.’ Since then I get my own meat of him, and he gives me decent weight, I must admit. But the day before yesterday the meat seemed to me inferior, and so when I saw him standing in front of his shop-door I gave him a reminder

Life in a Garrison Town

and said, 'My boy, look out!' and yesterday there came gratis that joint of irreproachable roasting pork which my old woman cooked to-day. Yes, my friend, the straight tip is to save in one place and profit in another."

The Sergeant-Major grinned and tapped his trouser pocket in the depths of which rattled a well filled purse. Then he tossed off another glass of wine.

"Drink, man, you are not drunk already?"

"Drunk or no, it's not easy to stop. So here's 'Good Health.'"

In this strain the conversation proceeded. After a third bottle had been emptied it was easy to see, judging by their looks, that they would not be able to stand much more. Their eyes had a glazed, watery stare and their faces were flushed scarlet from the unwonted indulgence in Moselle. They grew loud and stuttering in their speech, and Roth especially could scarcely articulate a coherent sentence. Suddenly he looked at the clock. It was six, the hour for evening duty in the stable.

"Come, Schmitz," said Roth, "we must be off to the stable; the beasts will be hungry."

Life in a Garrison Town

They staggered on to their feet. Roth buckled on his sabre and the two toppers stumbled down the stone staircase of the barrack. Roth let his sabre drag behind him, and it was a funny sight to watch how the heavy weapon bumped clanking from step to step.

Many of the men stuck their heads out at their doors full of curiosity to see who was coming, and when they beheld their convivial superiors they thought to themselves, "They have had a drop too much. If one of us reeled about the barracks in that besotted condition we should soon be dropped on."

At the exit from the building Lance-Corporal Dietrich of the fourth squad stepped up to Roth, "I wish to ask you, Herr Wachtmeister, to be so good as to give out a few coals for Room X; our ride was for foraging and we are all wet through. It is cold upstairs, and without fire our clothes will not be dry by the morning."

"What! Coals indeed! Go to the Quartermaster! I've no coal for you scoundrels," hiccuped Roth.

"The Quartermaster is in town and

Life in a Garrison Town

the Herr Wachtmeister has the key of the cellar."

"Get out of my way. You don't want coal because of a few drops of rain. Go to bed if you are freezing, you low pack of swine."

The Corporal hesitated a moment, then with an indignant face he went back into the barrack. The stable-yard was by this time empty again, the men having gone back to their rooms after pulling out the hay and watering the horses. Only the stable-guard was still present.

One of them, a corporal, had in civil life become so fat that the Quartermaster, with the best intention in the world, couldn't find a coat to fit the "over-fed reservist-hound," so the unfortunate man had to go on duty in a fustian suit as stable-guard. The second man in the guard was consumptive. It had only been discovered a week after he came, and now there was no object in discharging him, as in the stable he was not exposed to hardships. The third came from Poland, was half imbecile and grinned perpetually like a lunatic; he was unavailable for service, for he addressed his superiors as "thou," and paid them the honour of taking off his cap to them.

Life in a Garrison Town

The forage-master was alarmed to find the feeding-hour so long gone by, for his worst enemy could not deny that he was scrupulous in the care of the beasts committed to his charge. He called the stable-guard impatiently, and goaded them into hurrying with a "run, you lazy lumps." The little forage-cart was filled with oats and corn and driven into the stable-lane. The crunching of its wheels was the sweetest music of the day to the horses. As they heard it now a new life came into the animals that had been standing hitherto with listlessly hanging heads, for they had begun to think their supper had been forgotten. They plunged wildly about in the boxes, butting and licking each other, and kicked out exuberantly. The rattle of chains, combined with the neighing and whinnying of the horses, made quite a din and tumult. "Napoleon" was so mad with hunger that out of pure joy he greeted the fat corporal as he swung the fodder towards him with a blow in the stomach, which made him drop the oats and press his hands against the injured spot with a face distorted by pain.

The Sergeant-Major saw this happen and shouted to him.

Life in a Garrison Town

“Go on! Pick it up! A pat like that won't hurt your big paunch.”

But the Corporal showed no sign of obeying the order and still held his stomach, while tears started to his eyes. Then Roth wheeled round on him, cuffed him in the back with his fist, took hold of his throat from behind and pressed him down on the ground with such force that the blood mounted to the poor fellow's head as he grovelled for the upset oats among the straw. When he had finished Roth gave him another shove that brought him in contact with “Napoleon's” hind-leg, to which he clung in terror of falling under the horse's hoofs.

This was a little more than “Napoleon” could treat as a joke. First, no fodder and then such a liberty taken with his leg. He struck out with both powerful hind-legs and hurled the poor Corporal out into the stable lane, where he lay unconscious.

For a moment Roth was frightened.

Luckily no one had witnessed the incident, as Schmitz was busy at the end of the stable with the other two. So he called the two reservists and ordered them to carry the unconscious man into the quarter-room.

Life in a Garrison Town

It was likely to be a serious business, for the poor fellow had been kicked in the face.

The next morning when the First Lieutenant inquired why the Corporal was in hospital Roth answered.

“He blundered up to one of the horses clumsily and frightened it so much that it struck out and hit him on the head.”

“What an ass!” said the First Lieutenant angrily. “By rights the fellow should be kept locked up for spoiling the horses.”

The Sergeant-Major was put out of temper for the rest of the evening. Quiet again reigned in the stable, only the sound of the horses munching the oats was to be heard.

Roth looked into the fodder-bin.

“Give what’s left to ‘Zeus.’ He’s lean,” he said to Schmitz.

“No. I’ll give him no more, he’s had enough; besides, he kicked someone this morning. The brute goes nearly crazy penned up in his box all day lame, and devouring such a heap of oats.”

“Give him the rest, he can stand it.”

“But why? It’s more than his share.”

The Sergeant-Major grew purple in the face. Nothing made him so furious as to be contradicted.

Life in a Garrison Town

“Give him the rest, I say,” he blustered forth once more to Schmitz.

But Schmitz shut down the cover of the bin and replied shortly :

“I am always glad when I can economise.”

Roth roared out in a towering rage :

“Sergeant Schmitz, you refuse then to carry out my order? I shall report you.”

So saying he turned his back on the dumbfounded forage-master, and with a scowling countenance reeled out of the stable to his quarters where he drained a glass of schnaps to compose his nerves and threw himself on the bed in his uniform.

The consumptive and the Pole stuck another handful of hay in the manger of each horse, and lay down to sleep on the straw in a corner of the stable.

Sergeant Schmitz went to his room full of thought.

At noon the next day an orderly of the regiment’s reserve squadron handed him a document that ran as follows : —

Report.

Yesterday during the evening stable-duty Sergeant-Major Roth, who was superintend-

Life in a Garrison Town

ing the same, issued a command to Sergeant Schmitz which the latter did not carry out. When Sergeant-Major Roth repeated the command with emphasis, Sergeant Schmitz again refused to follow it. The incident took place in the presence of the stable-guard. Further the said Sergeant Schmitz, according to the evidence of the said Roth, was drunk. — (Signed) SPECHT, *First-Lieutenant of the Squadron and Officer in Command of the 2nd Reserve.*

The forage-master was at his dinner when the sergeant for the week came up to him, declared him under arrest and took him to the local police-station, where he was to await a final decision on the case — his offence was described as a distinct refusal of obedience in the presence of an assemblage of troops. Thus the two sentinels of the stable-guard counted as an assemblage of troops.

News of the occurrence spread like wildfire from mouth to mouth. Everyone was indignant at Roth's harsh and high-handed conduct, and the officers themselves were unanimous in their opinion that such a bully ought to be dismissed.

But Roth himself felt very important and

Life in a Garrison Town

conscious of having performed an heroic act. Off duty he was a comrade who would allow you to crack a joke with him and not spoil sport, but once on duty, the devil! Then shouldn't the common soldier learn to know his place! then all familiarity was at an end, and it was, "I command and you obey, or I'll break your neck." Meanwhile Sergeant Schmitz sat inert in his cold, dreary cell. All day he had stared at the uneven stone floor, and believed he must be dreaming. He could not, no, he could not believe that, on account of a military misdemeanour, he had really been put behind bolts and bars. After nine long years of service in which he had conducted himself blamelessly without ever once being punished.

Only by degrees he awoke to a consciousness of how serious his position was, and at the same time there grew up within him a burning hatred of the man whom he had regarded as a friend, who in a rage induced by drink had torn from him the fruits of his unblemished past and blasted his future. Directly he was free again he would show him up, the knave! The low sordid nature beneath the rascal's plausible exterior should be hidden from no one.

Life in a Garrison Town

There seemed to him little doubt that he would be brought before a court-martial. As the matter stood it was on the surface distinctly an insubordination, but the trial must lay bare the circumstances that led up to the apparent breach of discipline. The Court would have to take into consideration every aggravation given, and afterwards only deal with the quarrel, to which a purely professional character might be falsely attributed if the friendly relations which had existed between Roth and Schmitz up to the moment of the punishable action were not borne in mind.

This point must be elucidated at the inquiry with skill and penetration, for the result depended on it.

Sergeant Schmitz therefore applied to the regiment for an advocate, and at the same time for permission to communicate with him either by letter or word of mouth. He was not a little taken aback when after a few days the information reached him that a military tribunal could only provide counsel for the defence in the final trial of a misdemeanour, but there was no hindrance to the prisoner engaging an advocate at his own expense and holding consultation with him

Life in a Garrison Town

during the inquiry. So this was the state of things. And where was he to get money for his defence? Without counsel he felt there was small prospect of success, that he would be at a disadvantage before the glib-tongued Roth and his judges.

He could not set forth all the circumstances of the case in the right light which seemed to him so important for clearing up the matter. There was no help for it; the money must be found.

After three weeks of preliminary inquiry, a day was at length appointed for the proceedings. Schmitz now awaited the result with calmness, for his advocate had pronounced it a certainty that the case must go in his favour, so soon as the judges had a clear sketch laid before them of all the circumstances and of Roth's conduct. Schmitz looked forward therefore to the day as the moment of release from the solitude and wretchedness of the last three weeks.

Not that the charge sheet which was at last laid before him sounded very propitious, but he would not let it depress him, believing it to represent the affair in the worst light possible in order that a motive might be found for the proceedings at all.

Life in a Garrison Town

It ran: —

“Sergeant Ferdinand Julius Schmitz is charged and liable to punishment for offending against Clause 94 of the Military Statute Book. Although the accused asserts that he stood in particularly friendly relations to Sergeant-Major Roth, it is impossible to see in that circumstance any reason which justifies his failing to carry out a command when on duty.

“Moreover the disobedience occurred after a command given twice with emphasis in presence of the stable-guard, thus before assembled troops.

“The plea made by the accused that in consequence of over-indulgence in wine he was in an excited condition does not extenuate his fault. On the contrary, the fact of bringing drunkenness into the sphere of duty is only likely to be a reason for increasing the penalty.

“Final decision on the case will be given by a court-martial.”

The language was ominous certainly. As if he were a criminal of the blackest dye — he who for nine years had served the regiment without reproach! He could almost have laughed over the charge; it contained such

Life in a Garrison Town

a trumped-up and one-sided view of the case.

On the 20th of October at noon the proceedings began.

The judges had come over from the country-seat of the General in command of the regiment, and sat with serious faces at the long table, a major, a captain, a first lieutenant, a court-martial barrister to lead the case and another who read the charge.

After Schmitz had again given his version of the affair, Roth was called as witness. He put the whole matter in the very darkest light. He disowned ever having had any friendship with Schmitz and denied most emphatically being drunk, as Schmitz had affirmed. He had got the consumptive and the Pole to bear witness to his sobriety. The latter had been instructed by Roth to shake his head in response to all questions, a method which met with success as it chanced to be most damaging to the accused. Finally the Sergeant-Major, with great solemnity and in steady voice, swore that he was speaking the truth.

This gave an unexpected turn to the affair. Schmitz had not reckoned on having to contend with lies, and his hopes sank to a

Life in a Garrison Town

low ebb when he met the Major's eyes fixed on him with an expression of haughty disapproval.

Then followed the speech for the prosecution by the court-martial barrister, which was very much to the same effect as the charge-sheet. Afterwards counsel for the defence rose, and described the occurrence once more in fluent language. He weighed every little circumstance, referred to the former friendly relations of the two men, which had been corroborated by evidence, and concluded by pointing out that the whole thing was but a wind-up to a birthday carousal. In consideration of this and the previous unstained career of the accused, he claimed for him an acquittal.

The court retired for consultation, and it seemed a long time before the judges appeared again with grave faces.

Schmitz thought he must swoon as he heard the sentence.

Two months' imprisonment!

He saw his life blighted. All in vain had been the long years of hard work in which he had made himself a willing sacrifice to the service of his fatherland. With one blow his dreams and plans for the future were laid

Life in a Garrison Town

in the dust. He could never now after twelve years' service obtain the post in the municipal office of his native town. What would become of his parents, brothers and sisters? What of his betrothed?

An inexpressible fury of rage took possession of him. He could have strangled the man on the spot whose coarse temper and perjury had so ruined his prospects, who at this minute passed him with a sneer on his face. Yes, he even heard the Colonel say to the dishonourable cur:

“That's satisfactory, Roth. Vigilance on duty is what I desire in my non-commissioned officers.”

Well, he would have vengeance. He swore that he would. Schmitz was removed by a sergeant on the 20th of October to a fortress where many hours of introspection and weary days were to be his lot.

Christmas was drawing near. The barrack yard was covered with snow, and the landscape lay lifeless and paralysed by the bitter cold of the last few days.

A great number of the soldiers had been granted leave of absence for the festival, and all of them were straining every nerve to do their work well lest at the last moment they

Life in a Garrison Town

should be robbed of the pleasure that they were looking forward to.

The officers of the corps took the train nearly every evening, without permission, of course, to the neighbouring town to make Christmas purchases, for only one of them was going home, the others intending to celebrate the festive occasion in the casino, and to give little presents there.

Borgert and Leimann always returned loaded with parcels. They bought everything that took their fancy. Money to pay for the presents would turn up later, and at this time of year tradesmen were delighted to give credit if they could thereby get rid of their wares.

In the business part of the town they patronised a certain nook in a comfortable restaurant, where they dined after their shopping, and the two gentlemen generally went back to the garrison by the last train in a very convivial humour. One night a new brand of "Riesling" had been particularly relished, and all reached home in the small hours somewhat fuddled.

The Adjutant of the regiment found a telegram awaiting him at his house which concerned military business, and despite the

Life in a Garrison Town

lateness of the hour he was obliged to take it over to the regimental secretary to be answered.

Heavy snow had begun to fall, and the keen easterly wind drove the flakes whirling wildly through the cold night air, so that it was hard to keep one's eyes open and to find the way.

This midnight disturbance was not at all to the easy-going Müller's taste. He swore to himself as he came along the barrack avenue, for dissipation did not improve his temper, and when in his present condition he was cantankerous and prone to pick quarrels, in the course of which he would cast in one's teeth his position as Adjutant, and his long experience of the Service. His comrades termed it swelled head.

Only the lighted window of the guard-room was discernible through the cloud of snow-flakes that danced before its panes. Within slept the sentry and two privates. The officer on duty had already been round, so they had made themselves comfortable, and against the rules taken off sabre and helmet, loosened their coats, and fetched a warm rug from the barrack.

Private Röse was on guard. He had

Life in a Garrison Town

taken shelter from the weather in the sentry-box, and stood with his sabre clutched in his cold fingers crouching at the back of the little black and white striped house. Why should he not? It was distinctly permitted.

His thoughts were far away with his parents, brothers and sisters, whom in two days' time he was to meet again after a long separation. How happy he was at the prospect of going home now, a smart young cavalry soldier. He pictured himself embracing his loved ones and greeting his old friends in the stables, "Hans," the good old horse, the sleek cows and the fat pigs.

A loud call suddenly roused him from his pleasant dream.

"Sentinel!"

Röse blinked through the round loophole of the sentry-box, but could see no one.

Only when the loud summons rang out a second time on the winter air did he emerge from his box and saw a figure approaching through the blinding snow.

"Why didn't you salute, you hound?" roared the Adjutant.

"Pardon, Herr Lieutenant, I didn't see the Herr Lieutenant."

"Shut your mouth, you lying scum. You

Life in a Garrison Town

were asleep in the sentry-box ; I waited here an eternity ! But I'll teach you your duty, you clown."

With this he strode on and left Röse standing motionless with terror. In the business room of the regiment he wrote the following report.

"I found the sentinel on duty between 12 and 2 sleeping in the sentry-box. It was not till I had called twice that he came out. Any declaration on the man's part that he did not see me, I can beforehand denounce as a falsehood, for I took special notice of his having been asleep."

He laid the report on the commandant's writing-table. Then he got the secretary out of bed, kept him standing ten minutes in his night-shirt in the cold corridor while he gave him instructions, and then went back to his house feeling he had cooled his head and earned repose.

On the afternoon of December 22nd, Sergeant Schmitz came out of prison. He had lost his former proud, brisk bearing, his face was white, his black moustache, that had been wont to curl upwards aggressively, hung limp and straight round the corners

Life in a Garrison Town

of his mouth. He looked shyly at everyone he met, and if a soldier greeted him he regarded it as a special sign of friendliness quite undeserved. He fancied that he read in every eye, "See, here comes a felon, a criminal."

On reporting himself to the chief of the squadron, the latter held out his hand.

"I am really sorry, my dear Schmitz, that I must lose you. You were always a subordinate to be proud of, and no one else could equal you in the performance of your duty. But it is the Colonel's orders that I cancel your capitulations, and immediately discharge you. The Sergeant-Major will settle up the details. You may console yourself with the reflection that you have been the victim of the spite of a vulgar-minded bully. I wish you good luck, and if you ever want my help, I shall be pleased to give it. Good-bye."

It was with difficulty that Schmitz kept back his tears. The Captain turned towards the stable. He really felt it very keenly that this nice, honest fellow, a prop and ornament to the squadron, should for nothing at all be plunged into misfortune and put on the penal list.

Life in a Garrison Town

So Schmitz went next to the sergeant on duty, who gave him his papers and fifty marks on his savings-bank book. He too shook his hand warmly.

“Have you any claims on the sick pension fund, Schmitz?” he asked.

“I have had rheumatism since the manœuvres, when we had to bivouac three weeks on account of an epidemic amongst the horses.”

“But you didn’t report that, and it is now more than a year and a half ago.”

“No. I didn’t report it because I didn’t want to write myself down sick. I had no wish to leave the Captain in the lurch with the horses weak and run down.”

“Well, I will at once make a report of it to the regiment. Meanwhile you can give up your things.”

Schmitz mounted to his room, packed his uniform together, and corded his few possessions in a small box. Before he took off his uniform, however, he went into the town and bought a civilian’s suit for forty-five marks, a collar and a hat. Shoes he had. Then he carried all his uniform and accoutrements to the quartermaster, to whom he sold his extra coat, his own cap and a pair of trousers

Life in a Garrison Town

for thirty marks. He retained his sabre as a keepsake. Now came the hardest part of it all — his leavetaking from comrades and the horses. Everybody had a kind word for him, and many a silent handshake expressed the pain of parting thus from a comrade who had endeared himself to all. Even the common soldiers thronged round him to bid him farewell. It was true he had often rated many of them soundly, but they all respected him as a decent fellow who had stood by them in trouble.

When the midday stable duty was over, Schmitz went in to the horses. Nothing in all his life had ever been so hard as this; and as the beloved beasts looked up from their recently filled troughs at him, so soon as they heard his voice, he could have cried aloud in his grief and pain.

He had brought a lump of sugar for “Klärchen,” and when he came near her she hunted at once for the accustomed delicacy, and with raised foot begged for another. He laid his head against the animal’s neck, which was as smooth as satin, stroked her caressingly over the beautiful eyes and the soft ears, and kissed her on the throat. As he turned to leave her he felt that the melan-

Life in a Garrison Town

choly look she gave him and the low neigh were meant as a farewell. He said good-bye to old "Marie" and wondered how much longer she would be available for service. Last of all he went to "Napoleon," the "Child of Wrath," but to-day even he showed no sign of his usual viciousness, and only looked at the strange man in mufti with enquiring eyes.

One more farewell glance at the favourites and Schmitz, with strangled sobs, went back to his room to fetch his box. At the entrance he met the Sergeant.

"Your claims for sickness," said he, "don't hold good now, Schmitz, the Colonel declares. You should have put them in at once. What's more, he handed me the bill sent in by your lawyer, who has asked the regiment to see it is paid. The sum is sixty marks; if you can't pay it you may leave a pledge."

Schmitz had not thought of this. After a moment's reflection he said:

"In an hour, sergeant, the money shall be handed in."

Whereupon he went to the town, entered a watchmaker's shop and laid his silver watch and chain on the counter, and asked in a steady voice:

Life in a Garrison Town

“How much will you give me for it? I need money.”

The watchmaker regarded the article with a scornful eye, and then said :

“Twenty marks. That is really more than it’s worth.”

Schmitz calculated. Five and thirty marks he still had left. Twenty added thereto would make five and fifty. Five marks were still lacking. He drew resolutely a ring from his finger, the only remembrance he possessed of his dead father.

“What do you value that at?”

“Ten marks, not more.”

“Very well, I will let you have it for ten marks.”

Schmitz put the three gold pieces in his pocket, went back to the barracks, and counted out sixty marks to the Serjeant-Major, then fetched his box and started to catch the evening train.

Anyone who chanced to meet the pale-faced man with downcast eyes would not have guessed that he was a Royal Prussian serjeant, who, on account of a trifling fault, was cast out on the world, without a penny, with rheumatism in all his bones, and a love of the Fatherland crushed and dead in his

Life in a Garrison Town

heart. He must now seek a new vocation in life after having sacrificed the best of his powers, his health and his youth, to the State.

As he ascended the hill from which he could view the barrack buildings wrapped in their shroud of snow, he looked back and, shaking his fist threateningly, uttered a fierce curse.

Then he went to the station and got into a fourth-class carriage of the same train which was bearing many soldiers, laughing and joking merrily, to their homes to celebrate the Christmas festivities in the bosom of their families.

It was the evening of December 24th. The whole world, thousands and millions, were happy to-day, conscious of the magic which the most beautiful of all Christian feasts exercises on even the hardest nature, while it awakes in all of us sacred recollections. It is the High Feast of God's love to men, of the love of Christians for their neighbours. No one can listen to the solemn music of Christmas bells without a sense of tender emotion and quiet reverence; the powerful monarch in his palace, the poor man in his cottage, even the criminal behind

Life in a Garrison Town

the bars of his prison cell, all alike open their hearts to the beams of love which irradiate this holy eve.

Friedrich Röse sat in the chilly cell where, since his arrest for breach of his duty as sentinel, he was suffering a punishment of fourteen days' imprisonment.

Through the slit which let in the light, and was covered with fantastic frost patterns, he could look up at a window on the first floor of the third squadron's quarters, which was brilliantly illuminated by a Christmas tree. The solemn notes of the beautiful and immortal Christmas hymn, whose music is touching in its very monotony, echoed sadly on his ears. He sat on the edge of his hard plank bed shivering with cold, and a tear rolled down his cheek on to the stone floor. Again his thoughts were wandering to his home, but not now full of joyous anticipation; instead depression, sorrow and wistful longing were depicted on the young man's features. With what pleasure and zeal he had enlisted in the army! His father, once a sergeant in the Cuirassier Guards, had always painted the glories of military life in the most glowing colours, and had no

Life in a Garrison Town

higher ambition for his boy than to see him in his turn a smart non-commissioned officer. But now that could never be. He was under strict arrest, branded with shame for the whole term of his military service.

Suddenly his joy and pride in the soldier's calling had been turned into passionate hatred of the "red-coat" and of all that being a soldier implied; with one blow the industrious enthusiastic recruit had been converted into one of the many who are only soldiers because they are obliged, and who look forward to their discharge as a day of freedom.

And why had this happened? It was not because he had consciously neglected his duty, but because one of those officers who are supposed to be gentlemen had found it convenient to make him the scapegoat of his drunken ill-humour. And what this gentleman had stated in his report stood there as an unalterable fact, and whosoever doubted it would be but guilty of another breach of respect.

Röse had, in reply to questions of his Captain, described the whole occurrence, and solemnly maintained his innocence, but the Adjutant had persisted that the man was

Life in a Garrison Town

only substantiating his falsehood. What he had reported was a fact. Rather should he have confessed, "I have done you an injustice, for I made a mistake, being at the time drunk and out of temper." But it was not likely that he would own himself in the wrong — he, the high and mighty and unimpeachable Adjutant of the regiment. He had never done such a thing in his life, and, after all, what harm would it do if the fellow did spend a few days sulking in solitude?

What harm? Only this, that there would be one apostle the more to proclaim that as a soldier he had been a sorely oppressed human being, forced to wear a heavy yoke, the victim of his superior officers' capricious moods, who treated him, when it suited their convenience, with an undeserved harshness and injustice, against which he had no weapon of defence, such as he would have found in other walks of life, where individual action, self-respect, and character play a part.

And, further, it did this harm. Röse, in after years, when he laid his credentials before anyone, would see shoulders shrugged, and read in the gesture the thought, "You seem to have been a not very trustworthy

Life in a Garrison Town

youth — fourteen days for breach of sentinel duty. That's bad!"

At nine o'clock a noise at the door roused Röse from his reflections. A bunch of keys rattled, the lock clicked, and the officer on duty walked in, followed by the guard.

Röse jumped up, saluted, and, standing erect in military attitude, reported himself.

"Private Röse. Fourteen days for breach of sentinel duty."

The officer looked round the dark cell to see if any forbidden article besides the plank bed and water-jug had got in. Then he turned to go; on which Röse said hesitatingly:

"Will the Herr Lieutenant grant a favour?"

"Ask the guard if you want anything," the officer answered shortly, and clanked down the stone stairs, taking care that his light grey cloak should not brush the cobwebby walls.

The guard, after accompanying him to the doorway, came back to Röse.

"What is it you want?" he asked kindly.

"I should like to know if a letter has come for me, and if I shall be allowed to have it, Herr," Röse answered timidly.

Life in a Garrison Town

“Humph, my lad,” the non-commissioned officer laughed good-naturedly. “That’ll hardly do. First pain, then pleasure!” But he liked Röse, who had been in his squadron, and when he saw the poor boy’s woe-struck face he felt sorry for him. It was a hard case indeed to have to spend the festive season locked up here, and all because of a trivial charge of which he was innocent. So he said to Röse in a friendly tone, “Well, now, perhaps I’ll make inquiries.”

He unlocked the cell again and sent a man to Röse’s squad corporal with the request that he would come up to him, and when he came the guard asked :

“Is there any letter for Röse?”

“A letter? No, but a parcel has been handed over to me for him.”

“Look here,” whispered the guard ; “just undo it, will you, and let the fellow have something out of it. I am sorry for the poor wretch.”

The Corporal nodded and disappeared. In a minute he came back with a letter, a sausage, and a piece of cake, and the sentinel took them all and went up to Röse. At the same time he motioned a man to follow him with a scuttle of coals. Very soon the cell

Life in a Garrison Town

was illuminated by the rekindled fire, and in the light of the flickering flames Röse read his parents' letter. Tears rolled down his cheeks all the time. Then he hid the sausage and cake in his coverlet as if they had been precious jewels and lay down on the hard plank bed. Not long afterwards his red tearful eyes closed in sleep, and Röse in his dreams was joining hands under the Christmas tree at home with father and mother, sisters and brothers.

December 28th was a day of mourning for the fourth squadron. The soldiers who had only come back from their leave the evening before accompanied a comrade on his last journey; Lance Corporal Dietrich was carried to the grave. He had always been a delicate man, and that day, when overheated and drenched to the skin, he was not able to light a fire in his cold room because Roth would not give him out the coals, had been the last nail in his coffin. The same evening he was tossing in a high fever. After two days the doctor pronounced him to be suffering from inflammatory rheumatism of the joints and said his heart was affected. On Christmas Day the unfortunate man died of heart failure.

Life in a Garrison Town

His grief-stricken parents had telegraphed entreating that the corpse of their only son should be brought home to be buried, but as no money came to cover the expenses of a zinc coffin and of the transit, the burial took place in the garrison churchyard. The next day, the reserve corporal who had been kicked by "Napoleon," was discharged from hospital. His injuries appeared to be cured, but his whole face was shockingly disfigured, and his left eye had been removed for fear its injuries should affect the sight of the other. So the wretched man returned to his home, a physical wreck, to subsist on a pension of nine marks per month.

The former Sergeant Schmitz was sitting in his dreary lodging on New Year's Eve.

He had to face dire poverty and was barely earning his daily bread as a hand in a large factory in the neighbourhood. He inhabited one cheap room on the second floor of a workman's tenement, and was attended to for a trifle by a family that lived in the building. He sat now with his elbows on the table and his face buried in his hands. Before him was a plate containing the remains of his scanty supper, and a lamp

Life in a Garrison Town

with a broken shade threw a dull red glow on the bowed figure at the table and the miserable furniture of the small room. An iron bed with a red and white striped counterpane stood against the wall, and above it was fastened the scabbard and blade of his sabre in the form of a cross.

A jug and basin stood on a deal chair, and near it lay a greyish towel. The fire in the little stove had burnt down long ago, and only a few smouldering sparks lingered there.

It looked as if the man who sat at the table without moving must be asleep, but Schmitz was wideawake and wild thoughts were chasing each other through his brain. He was thinking of the past, and the more crudely his present condition stood out in contrast, the more fierce was his hatred for the low rascal who had brought him to this pass; he meditated on revenge and how he could punish and disgrace his enemy for his unscrupulous dastardly conduct.

For some time he continued to sit there brooding, then with a lowering countenance he rose and went to the window. He brushed away the frost-patterns, and looked over to the illuminated clock in the church

Life in a Garrison Town

tower from which already the deep melodious sound of the bells was announcing through the cold night the approach of the New Year.

Eleven o'clock! Schmitz put on his hat, seized his walking-stick, put out the lamp and went down the unlighted staircase.

For a moment he paused on the ice-covered steps before the front door, and listened to the solemn ringing of the bells. There was no other sound to be heard, not the echo of a single footstep, only far away a sort of hum filled the night—the hum of a great city on the eve of the New Year.

Schmitz shivered and turned up his coat collar, thrust his hands in his pockets, and with the stick under his arm hurried to the station, where he took a twopenny ticket to his old garrison, and got into the train, which was just starting.

The tiny town lay as if dead and deserted in its thick shroud of snow. The brightly-lighted barrack-windows shone out in the night like stars, and snatches of song or the notes of a concertina were softly borne through the air on the wings of the wind. From the distance came the murmur of innumerable church bells welcoming in the new year in the surrounding villages and hamlets. The

Life in a Garrison Town

chatter, and loud laughter and songs of festive toppers who were drinking the old year out, fell on the ear as he passed the brilliantly lit restaurants and beer-cellars. Schmitz bent his steps to that end of the town where the barracks stood, and stopped before a public-house. He looked round him nervously to see that no one was watching him, and then climbed on the wall and peeped through the nearest window.

As he expected, there was Roth sitting in a circle of other non-commissioned officers and corporals, for this was a haunt he was wont to visit every evening to drink far into the night and gamble a little.

Cautiously Schmitz climbed down and strode towards the barracks. He turned into a lane flanked with high snow-covered hedges and stationed himself in the first bend. This was Roth's way home.

Schmitz had a long time to wait at his post, but he didn't mind.

The bitter cold of the day had yielded at midnight to a mild winter breeze which drove the fine snowflakes gently before it and rustled in the dry branches of the beech-hedge. Below, where the narrow footway joined the road, figures were to be seen here

Life in a Garrison Town

and there rising like shadows against the grey landscape, and staggering noiselessly away through the snow—topers who, after a night's debauch, were going home to seek their bed.

Schmitz did not feel in the least cold, for every stroke from the clock in the distant steeple sent the blood coursing quicker through his veins; the moment he was anticipating with delight drew nearer and nearer. At last it struck two, and a dark figure was seen approaching.

The watcher drew himself further under the hedge, grasped his stick tighter, and his heart beat as if it would burst.

Roth was within a few yards, his face almost hidden in the high turned-up collar of his cloak.

Schmitz recognised the Sergeant-Major immediately as he advanced with reeling gait, whistling a comic song and dragging his sabre behind him.

When the Sergeant had come within a step of the spot where Schmitz awaited him, the latter planted himself in his enemy's path, holding his stick over his shoulder.

Roth started at first like a wild beast at bay, then he looked keenly at his antagonist. He did not recognise him.

Life in a Garrison Town

“What do you want?” he asked with a dry throat.

“To pay off old scores,” was the short rejoinder, which made the Sergeant-Major’s blood curdle.

For a moment the two men stood facing each other, and Roth recognised his quondam friend.

“Ah! it’s you, old chap! What are you about here?” he stuttered out in a hoarse voice.

“This is what I am about!” cried Schmitz, and his stick swung whistling through the air. The first blow caught his enemy full in the face.

The terrified man staggered a moment, and before he could seize his sabre hilt one powerful stroke after the other fell crashing on his face, head, shoulders and hands.

Then he hurled himself like an infuriated bull on his assailant. Schmitz, however, withstood the attack, and at last felled the sergeant on his back to the earth with a resounding blow on the face.

“There, you dishonest hound, you cowardly dirty carrion, take that for your scoundrelly meanness and that for your lies!” So saying he gave the prostrate

Life in a Garrison Town

form on the ground a farewell kick and went his way.

He called back jeeringly over his shoulder to his victim :

“ Now you may go and report me again, you swine, and I shall have another tale to tell this time.”

After the encounter the old forage-master felt comforted. Now he could bear his fate with more fortitude, for he had the satisfaction of knowing his adversary punished. Revenge is certainly sweet.

Sergeant-Major Roth was forced to spend several weeks in hospital till the wounds on his face and his hands were healed. The account he gave of the accident was that he had been assaulted by a drunken workman, whom he pretended he had struck down with his sabre. But no one quite believed this story, for no wounded workman had been seen, and neither did inquiries of the doctors in the neighbourhood elicit any information. Nearly everybody knew in his secret heart where the rod had been pickled that had chastised the abhorred Sergeant-Major.

Schmitz commemorated his act of vengeance on the eve of the New Year with a glass of beer.

Life in a Garrison Town

As he discovered in the light of the lamp that there was blood on his hand, he wiped it off with disgust as if it had been the blood of some unclean beast, and threw his pocket-handkerchief into the fire. Then he called out gaily :

“ Another glass, landlord ! ”

CHAPTER IV

TOWARDS the end of January bustle and excitement reigned in the officers' casino.

A whole gang of carpenters, painters, and gardeners were employed in converting the rooms and corridors, as well as the verandahs and winter garden, into a scene of festivity, with booths and tents, so that King Carnival should have a worthy entry in the early days of February.

Under the shade of the trees gaily painted kiosks, decorated with posters of every description, were opened, and the most tempting dainties, with all sorts of drinks, from simple seltzer to real French liqueurs, were to be offered for sale. In one tent soldiers were dressed up to look like a menagerie of wild beasts, in another a stage was erected in which a series of performances were to keep the risible faculties of visitors to the fête in constant exercise.

Life in a Garrison Town

A number of seats on the two lawns were placed there to attract people to listen to music and to enjoy genuine Pilsener beer. In the anteroom a temporary registrars's office was opened where, over a glass of champagne, one could get married for two-pence, and divorced again an hour later.

The large dining hall was the centre of the festivities. A platform decorated with evergreens provided a place for an orchestra, and the regiment's trumpeters had been scouring the country-side every day in search of a really ragged strolling-musician's get-up for the band.

A photographer's booth was much to the fore, on the outside of which a display of groups and cabinets were enticingly exhibited. Naturally the coming fête was the chief topic of conversation at the officers' mess. Each was anxious to appear in as original a costume as possible, and there was endless discussion before the dresses were decided on.

At length the festal day arrived. In the afternoon the services of a little troop of hair-dressers came into requisition, and the tailor of the regiment, needle and cotton in hand, went from one gentleman to another,

Life in a Garrison Town

altering what did not fit, and lending a helping hand where necessary.

At seven o'clock the orderlies, attired like waiters in black tail-coats, were ready to receive the merry-makers, and in less than half an hour most of the officers of the corps, with their wives and guests, had put in an appearance.

As they moved about in their bright-coloured and more or less tastefully designed costumes to the strains of dance-music, the effect was brilliant in the extreme. Champagne soon began to flow bountifully. One saw here a rough country bumpkin, with a knotted walking-stick between his legs, devouring a portion of caviare at a garden table, while near him a circus clown dispatched a lobster.

The most killing sight, however, was the Colonel in his costume of a Polish peasant, with a fur cap on his head. If he had appeared at a pig market in Pomerania dressed thus, every purchaser would have taken him for a notorious cattle-breeder, with whom it might be well to transact business. He seemed to have little difficulty in playing the *rôle* perfectly, for all his natural gestures and attitudes were admi-

Life in a Garrison Town

rably adapted to sustain the illusion. As the champagne was going free of charge, the Colonel, in a very short time, was half seas over.

His illustrious adjutant certainly had not been happy in his choice of the costume of a Polish Jew, for it only supplied what had been lacking before to complete his Israelitish cast of countenance.

Frau König was charming as a chambermaid, and her blue eyes beamed with delight. Indeed the fair-haired, trim young damsel could easily have obtained a good situation with high wages had she played her part in earnest. So thought a young huntsman, whose features bore a striking resemblance to those of Lieutenant Bleibtreu, and he resolved on the spot to "keep company" with the neat-handed Phyllis, and afterwards to visit the registrar's office in her society. Only the end of the fête cut short the young couple's blissful honeymoon, and Bleibtreu was rudely awakened to reality by the husband's command that the mock union should be forthwith dissolved.

Frau Leimann, as a Swiss peasant maiden, was also fascinating. The dress suited her remarkably well, and Borgert contemplated

Life in a Garrison Town

with gloating satisfaction his housemate's pretty figure and little feet.

Frau Kahle, in the guise of a flower girl, coquetted with the young men, having attracted all eyes to the décolletage of her bodice by fastening on it a magnificent rose. She played her part to admiration, for the exhilarating effects of the champagne made it come naturally to her. Lieutenant Kolberg, who was got up as a "dude," bought her whole stock of flowers, and then bantered her on being one of the unemployed.

Frau Rittmeister Stark alone seemed out of her element in the assembly. She had been greatly exercised as to what to wear, for to appear as a flower-girl or ballet-dancer seemed a little too audacious, whereas the *rôle* of butter or apple-woman might, she feared, be too suitable. Thus she floated amongst the throng in a spangled fancy dress, which, in response to inquiries, she archly described as that of "a mermaid of middle age." Out of clouds of pink and pale-green gauze billowed her ample bosom, while her bare arms suggested the stock-in-trade of a strong woman or giant lady in a show.

Three of the junior officers were capitally

Life in a Garrison Town

got up as a trio of vagabonds, and in their dirt and rags looked as if they had really sneaked in from the high road to attend for once in their lives a function of the "upper ten." The exceptional opportunities which this disguise offered of getting inebriated were not neglected. Lieutenant von Meckelburg stood motionless in a corner dressed as an organ-grinder and unable to make up his mind to mix with the lively crowd. The expression of his face was hardly jovial, and it was not till later, when he had hidden his musical paraphernalia behind a marquee, that his spirits gradually rose, for which change in his aspect an emptied bottle of champagne was responsible.

The band played most charming dance music, and devoted itself in the intervals to a beer cask, the tap of which was to be seen protruding from the green firs which surrounded the kiosk.

At 11 o'clock a performance began on the little stage erected for the purpose. A lieutenant recited as prologue some spicy couplets, and then proceeded in *café chantant* style to caper about in an extremely low-necked baby's frock. The programme closed with a burlesque on Shakespeare's

Life in a Garrison Town

“Hamlet,” in the course of which all the characters came to a gruesome end by means of poison, violence, lightning or thirst. At the close the prompter himself came on the boards and was so overcome by the scene of carnage going on before his eyes that he ended his uneventful career by a suicidal plunge down a trap-door.

In this manner the fun waxed more fast and furious, so that at last there was little to distinguish, except the ever-flowing wine, between the carnival of the officer’s corps and the boisterous horse-play of a village fair.

Meanwhile Lieutenant Kolberg had retired with Frau Kahle to an arbour, where he wheeled a garden screen before the door in order to spend a confidential half-hour undisturbed and unseen.

A little flirtation was to him a necessity of existence, and he hoped to console himself in his present companionship for the lack of sport among the steady daughters and virtuous wives of the citizens of the garrison town. He had learnt from Pommer what sort of character Frau Grete was, and had intended to feel his way diplomatically. But the conquest took a shorter time than even he had calculated. In a quarter of an hour

Life in a Garrison Town

the little woman, intoxicated with rapture and pleasure, lay in his arms, and the fiery young gallant met with no resistance in examining minutely the rose on the bosom of his new mistress. What a different sort of fellow, thought she, was this from his halting, awkward predecessor? Here was someone full of fire and courage, and she began at once to picture in the rosiest hues the delights of an amour with this newly-vanquished Romeo.

In another arbour Lieutenant Leimann sat quite alone shedding floods of tears. He had as usual reached the maudlin stage punctually after the sixth glass.

He refused to be comforted, and the orderlies nearly died of laughter at sight of the howling Hungarian magnate seated on a barrel, looking the picture of misery, sobbing his heart out.

His wife found the situation extremely boring, and decided to have a sick headache on the spot. So with a tired and jaded air she retired to another nook, and begged Borgert, who had joined her there, to take her home.

Not at all displeased at the request, he offered the fair Swiss peasant his arm, led her to the cloak-room, threw her fur cloak

Life in a Garrison Town

over her shoulders, and escorted her to her house, which was also his.

When they reached the door, she said, in a soft voice, sighing deeply —

“The air has done me good. I am quite well again.”

“Then do you wish me to accompany you back to the casino?” was Borgert’s answer. His tone betrayed distinct disappointment.

“Oh, no! let us go in and have a cup of coffee. It will do us good. I have no desire to be amongst those drunken people any more. To me it is a repulsive sight.”

“Just as you like, Gnädigste.” Whereupon he put his key in the lock, opened the door, and the two went silently up the dark staircase together.

When they entered the room Borgert fetched the lamp and lighted it. He knew exactly where to find it. Then he took up a newspaper and threw himself lazily into the corner of the sofa.

Frau Leimann had gone into the next room, and in a few minutes reappeared with the coffee-machine. She had taken off her fancy dress and exchanged it for a morning *negligée*, which clung in soft folds to her beautiful figure.

Life in a Garrison Town

“There!” said she, drawing the curtains. “At last we are within our own four walls again, and can have a comfortable little chat.”

She sank as she spoke on to the sofa, and Borgert drank in with his eyes the outline of her fair youthful form beneath the soft draperies.

“At last we are alone, one might say,” Borgert said jestingly. “Let us hope your husband doesn’t come home soon and spoil our idyllic coffee drinking.”

“My husband,” replied Frau Leimann, with contemptuously curled lips. “He can stay where he is. If I know him, he won’t be home till the morning. Oh, I am terribly sick of the man. I may speak openly to you?”

“Yes, gnädige Frau. Such are the joys and sorrows of matrimony. First prove him to whom you are going to bind yourself for ever, says Schiller, or else there will be trouble.”

“You speak truly. How can anyone during the few weeks of an engagement know what the future is going to be, as one does directly one is married? Had I foreseen how things would be we should never have committed the folly of getting married.

Life in a Garrison Town

He has found out now I am too poor, and every day he is becoming more intolerable to me."

"For that reason I shall never marry. The game is too hazardous."

"Yes, but what else is one to do," answered Frau Leimann, almost irritably. "Who would wish to be held up to scorn and ridicule as an 'old maid.'"

"According to our laws and social statutes, gnädige Frau, I admit one must certainly either marry or remain single. But it is a flaw in our system of ordering the world. How few there are who, after long years of married life, if confronted with the question, Would they marry each other if they had it to do again, would answer honestly 'Yes.' The majority would willingly separate on the spot. I therefore should propose that a condition ought to exist whereby, say, after ten years of marriage, separation should be possible, and both parties permitted to enter into another contract with someone else."

"You are right. Many would be glad to part from each other after the first week, yet they are bound to go on vegetating together in so-called wedlock."

Life in a Garrison Town

“To part in the first week would be acting rather precipitately, my dear lady, for there are husbands and wives who take some years to learn to know and appreciate each other, and then it may happen that they become deeply attached after having lived a cat and dog life together.”

“Of course. But if there is no love after ten years there never will be any.”

“There I agree with you,” Borgert said, with a laugh. “You see marriage is not an up-to-date institution. It may be all very well for two human beings who have material advantages to gain by their union to marry. But, for two who marry because they imagine they love each other, when love is dead, marriage is a martyrdom, and therefore there ought to be some other arrangement for those who wish to come together, but not to be fettered for life.”

“You mean that marriage in these cases should be replaced by ‘Free Love.’”

“Exactly, gnädige Frau, either that or, if for any other reasons it should not be feasible, why not have an arrangement such as they have in Oriental countries? When a husband gets tired of a wife there, if I may express myself so drastically, he passes on to

Life in a Garrison Town

the next, for he is allowed a whole houseful, and he is never likely to get so sick of one when so much variety is granted him in love. It is impossible to force men into loving the same person always."

"If once you do away with ordinary marriage it seems to me free love would be preferable to polygamy, being less hampered by hard and fast restrictions."

"Quite so. If one defines marriage, what does it amount to but nonsense? It is unnatural in its demands. Marriage, as we understand it, is a contract between a man and a woman who either love each other or for whom outward circumstances make a union advisable. The Church and the Law, very often only the latter, render this contract binding. But first take the case of those who love each other. Will their love last always to the end of their lives? No. Only in a very few instances does love exist to start with, but the marriage laws have been decreed by God and Nature to bind lovers together. If they fail to accomplish this they are useless. Secondly, a marriage of convenience is not a marriage at all in the true sense. A contract entered into for the sake of worldly advantages belongs to the sphere of com-

Life in a Garrison Town

merce, and should be settled by business methods, not by the sacred tie of matrimony. Thirdly, a marriage, which presents the possibility of love cooling, is futile; for at the ceremony we are called upon to make a solemn vow before the priest, God's representative, that we will belong to one another for ever in the bonds of love. So soon as love vanishes this oath is turned into perjury. And how can anyone force me to swear what I myself don't know I shall be able to perform? It is impossible to go against nature. Thus, the whole theory of marriage is exploded. But what else have the Church and the Law to do with the binding together of two people who love each other? The Church gives its blessing and thereby sanctifies the union. What could be a more superfluous and hollow form? For the sacred element with which the Church ceremony is supposed to endow the union is already there when a man and woman know that their passion is strong enough to unite them. Further, the Law must exist to settle the normal standard of opinion; without the Law there could be no State, no working together for a common end. But the love that is to unite a man

Life in a Garrison Town

and woman needs no laws except nature's. The Law draws up statutes and precepts for the general benefit of the community, but it has no control over sentiment; it cannot make that lawful or unlawful. Certainly, then, for two people who really love each other, and feel that they belong to each other, the most natural and sensible bond is that of free love."

"But why should they not marry if they are so convinced that they belong to each other?" interposed Frau Leimann.

"Because when their love dies they will have made no false vows at the altar, and can then quietly separate."

"There is the Divorce Court."

"Of course there is. But a divorce raises so much dust, and often has such unsatisfactory results, that a pair will rather continue to live together in perpetual disagreement, year after year, hating and despising each other, before they can make up their minds to appeal to the Divorce Court. Apart from the great legal difficulties it is not easy to arrange separation in outward circumstances and the division of money, and so on. On the other hand, when free love ceases, one parts quietly without any fuss, and is saved

Life in a Garrison Town

from the miserable farce of a married life without love. A man and woman whose only bond is love are not likely to deceive each other, and there would thus be less sin and unhappiness in the world."

"But wouldn't it put an end to all social intercourse between families, in a circle say of officers or barristers? All the women would come from such different classes that they would have nothing in common."

"I see nothing to object to in that, gnädige Frau. Those who were in sympathy could associate with each other, while those who were not would not be forced to know each other. This is better, surely, than women who are thoroughly uncongenial in their tastes having to appear as if they were great friends because society demands it."

"I dislike the system above all things. Our ladies' coffee parties are enough to disgust you with it."

"In free love a woman's choice of her society is not confined to one class, for the man does not make use of the woman to improve his social position out of doors or to advance himself in his profession, but he requires her only for the purpose of love for the most intimate relations of the home."

Life in a Garrison Town

“Yet marriage is after all but the form for the law of nature which propagates the human race.”

“Yes; but this law of nature is much better ordered in free love than in a legal union. Take for instance a marriage where love has ceased to exist. The pair are not divorced, and children are brought into the world one after the other. These are not children born of love, and their education, character, and disposition will suffer accordingly. A child is not slow to discover when there is no sympathy, no union of hearts and souls between his parents. In free love the number of children will be limited, because a husband who loves his wife sincerely does not treat her like a machine, and surely two children are sufficient to promote the happiness of a marriage. If among the lower classes the number of children diminishes, one of the crying evils that fosters socialism is removed.”

“Well, take a case where there are five children of a legitimate marriage and then substitute free love for such a marriage. The man will probably take up with a fresh woman every year, and after twenty years under normal conditions he will have twenty

Life in a Garrison Town

children instead of five. What will become of them? He can't expect to bring all the children of his old *liaisons* into his latest; and the number increasing every year, how are they all to be brought up?"

"There might be a law to make a father responsible for the maintenance of children born of free love similar to the one concerning ordinary illegitimate children. Then he would be careful to arrange matters so that the claim on his income should not be too heavy."

"Suppose number 2 objects to the child of number 1 being brought into the house?"

"There might be institutions on a grand scale for the children of free love. Even under present conditions it is often better for a child to grow up away from its parents and not to be a witness of their quarrels, which can hardly have a salutary effect on his mind. Nevertheless children are called the pledges of love, and their presence in a house would often help to strengthen the tie."

"That would bring us back to marriage."

"Yes; but a marriage that might be dissolved any day of one's own free will! It would be well if mankind imitated nature

Life in a Garrison Town

in everything; to try and elaborate and improve it has generally the opposite effect. Animals do not go to the altar or the registrar's office when they want to mate. And so soon as they have had enough of each other they run away in opposite directions, one north, the other south."

"But we are not animals," said Frau Leimann with a laugh.

"We have love, they instinct; that is the difference."

Frau Leimann was silent. It was long since she had engaged in such a serious conversation, and her head quite ached with thinking so much. It seemed to her there were still points in the argument to be contested, but in the main she felt free love was right, and almost deplored that civilisation was not yet advanced enough to adopt it. It would have been infinitely more to her taste than marriage with a tiresome ugly man like her husband who had so many bad qualities. She possessed sufficient feminine penetration to know what Borgert was driving at by thus airing his views. So she tip-tilted her flushed face, glanced roguishly at the apostle of Free Love, and said with well feigned ingenuousness —

Life in a Garrison Town

“Now please tell me what a woman is to do who is already bound by the law of marriage, and yet has gradually come to the conclusion that she would prefer free love?”

“She should certainly act on her conviction, though not openly, in the sight of all, being bound in honour to recognise outwardly the still existing principle of marriage. She should manage like the fair Parisians.”

“Then I must look round me at once for some clandestine Romeo, for my lawful husband has become insupportable,” Frau Leimann exclaimed merrily.

“Perhaps I can be of some service to you, Gnädigste,” Borgert retorted, also in jest.

“You certainly may simplify matters, for if my memory is not at fault you once were kind enough to offer to fill the *rôle* yourself.”

“In which case I am ready to offer my services now.”

“Then we can test your new theory together. It’s a pity there is no secret registrar’s office at hand. Ah, but I forgot you reject all preliminaries as superfluous.”

“There is no necessity for them. We can transact the business between ourselves,” said Borgert, laughing.

Life in a Garrison Town

“Does it require no formalities?”

“Of course, a great many, and the same as come after a legitimate marriage ceremony.”

“Indeed! You mean a pressure of the hand and an intense tearful expression.”

“That is also part of it.”

“Part? What comes next, I have such a bad memory.”

“I will whisper it in your ear if you will come a little closer.”

Frau Leimann drew herself nearer Borgert, and said, smiling artlessly —

“It seems to be a great mystery.”

She bent her head towards Borgert, who at this moment threw both his arms round the beautiful woman, while his lips sought hers. She, too, put her arms round his neck, and they clung to each other in a long embrace, the love which had been for some time pent up in their hearts finding vent at last in a glowing passionate kiss.

The lamp had burnt low when a heavy, uncertain step was heard on the staircase.

“He is coming!” Frau Leimann exclaimed in horror. “You must make haste or he will hear you.”

A last embrace, and Borgert darted through

Life in a Garrison Town

the dining-room to the far end of the corridor and went by the back stairs to his rooms on the ground floor, taking the precaution to remove his shoes before he crept noiselessly down the dark staircase.

Frau Leimann blew out the lamp, put Borgert's coffee cup under the sofa, and lay back amongst the soft cushions apparently asleep. Meanwhile Leimann had opened the corridor door noisily, and entered the room where his wife awaited him.

He paused a moment on the threshold. He fancied that he smelt the smoke of a cigarette. Then he put out his hands and fumbled on the table for a match-box, lit a candle, and beheld his wife on the sofa.

The sight touched him. The faithful little soul had been sitting up then to make him a cup of coffee? And now she had naturally fallen asleep, worn out, and not heard him come in. He approached the end of the sofa cautiously and kissed his wife on the forehead. She started up with a little cry.

"Oh, is it you, Max? Where have you been all this time?"

"Don't be angry, my angel, for keeping you waiting, but I never thought you would sit up. Why didn't you go to bed?"

Life in a Garrison Town

There was an affectionate ring in his voice that sounded almost like an apology or plea for pardon. Frau Leimann rubbed her sleepy eyes and arose wearily.

“I was obliged to wait up for you, Max, you were again in such a dreadful condition. When I saw you sitting there it made me so miserable that I came home.”

“Alone, and so late! Why did you not get an orderly to accompany you?”

“Borgert brought me to the door. He offered me his escort.”

“I must thank him to-morrow; he is as a rule very attentive to you. What became of him? I scarcely saw him the whole evening.”

“He complained of headache. He probably went to bed.”

“Why didn’t you offer him a cup of coffee?”

“Really, Max, what would the servants think if they had heard me bring in a man at that hour of the night? Marie is always peeping and listening at keyholes; and one has to be careful what she picks up. I should be afraid to say how much she has gossiped about us already.”

“Send her away if you can’t trust her.”

“I should have done it long ago, but I

Life in a Garrison Town

cannot give her warning till her wages are paid."

"Then pay them to-morrow."

"How can I pay them? Have you got the money?"

"I? You know very well that out of my wretched screw I cannot provide for the household. Hasn't your mother sent anything this month?"

"No; this time she hasn't enough for herself."

"Oh, of course, the old story."

"Is that intended for a reproach? You knew from the first that I was not well off, so do me the favour, please, of sparing me your grumblings and taunts, for they are in very bad taste."

"You don't like to hear the truth. You ought to have known long ago that to keep up a household without money is an absurdity. Every day now there is the beastly nuisance of first the butcher, then the baker and the laundress calling for their money."

"Wasn't it you who gave me no peace? You who refused to consider the obstacles and would insist on a marriage?"

"I may have done so, but you and your

Life in a Garrison Town

mother should have had the sense to see what folly it was. Your mother, at least, knew what it cost to keep up a house. How should I know? Now it is too late."

"I can see that for myself. You needn't rub it in. But I am not to blame, and if things had turned out according to my mother's wishes you would not be scolding your wife to-day. You were not the only man I could have married."

"You should have said so before," her husband answered contemptuously. "I very much regret having destroyed your brilliant prospects."

"You are more vulgar than I thought, Max."

"You women can never bear to hear the truth. Unless one is eternally flattering and soft-soaping you, you take offence at once."

"At any rate, you do not overwhelm me with attentions of that kind."

"Because you don't deserve them. Perhaps I should be grateful to you for not knowing how I am to pay my shoemaker's bill, when instead I might be leading a decent bachelor's life at the Staff College?"

"Hold your tongue, you insolent wretch ;

Life in a Garrison Town

you have no right to insult me! Leave this room or I leave the house."

"I obey your command, my Gnädigste. Sweet repose!"

So saying Leimann slammed the door till the window-panes rattled, and went to his bedroom.

His wife hid her face, sobbing in the sofa cushions, and poured out in floods of tears all the anger and hatred she felt for her heartless husband. Her whole being rose in furious revolt against the brutal nature of the man whom she had consented to follow, because on his knees he had sworn he could not live without her. Now he repaid her by trampling her love under his feet, desecrating all the sacred memories a woman's heart associates with the most serious step in her life, instead of being her support and comfort in time of trouble.

And only a few minutes before she had, as Borgert released her from his embrace, felt guilty almost of committing a crime, of outraging the sanctity of marriage and practising a deception on one who suspected nothing. Now she gloried in her action, and was sure that it was only her husband's just retribution for his heartless unfeeling brutal-

Life in a Garrison Town

ity. For a woman's heart is never so receptive to the illicit love of another man than at the moment when it is writhing under the death-blow administered by her own husband.

The dawn of the new day drove the last merry-makers from the casino. Without exception the champagne had done its work, and everyone left the festive scene in a state in which it would be very easy afterwards to transgress the bounds of good manners.

Five struck from the neighbouring church tower when the very last guests — Captain Stark, his wife and the Colonel — mounted the regimental carriage that they had kept waiting three hours. The horses were so stiff from standing so long in the rain which had come on that they could hardly be induced to drag their burden through the morning mist. Only after the coachman had received a poke which he passed on with the whip to the poor brutes did the conveyance rumble forward and deposit the night revellers at their dwellings. Lieutenant von Meckelburg and Lieutenant Specht could scarcely stand on their legs, but they went to the barracks for 5-6 drill directly they had changed their clothes, and Specht, it is true,

Life in a Garrison Town

forgot to take off his false moustache, and appeared with this unwonted manly decoration before his amused recruits.

The other gentlemen preferred for the most part to sleep off their carousal to going on duty, thinking that before 11 o'clock to-day there wasn't likely to be a captain at the barracks.

They were right in their conjecture, though Captain König was there punctually at 7 o'clock to be present at Bleibtreu's riding instruction, and afterwards to take in hand an inspection of the barracks. His principle was, enjoy yourself as much as you like, but duty is duty.

Hagemann did not appear on the scene before eleven, when he hoped to walk off the effects of his debauch. Stark, on the other hand, elected to stay at home altogether. His indefatigable wife took the command instead, and, with the report-book in her hand, saw that all the riding instructors were at their different divisions. The first she dotted down as having shirked duty was Kolberg.

At 1.30 she received a visit from Captain Hagemann, who came to apologise, because on the previous evening, in consequence of

Life in a Garrison Town

being excited, he had made the "sea-nymph" some rather doubtful compliments. He had expressed himself as sure that, owing to her wealth of fat, she must ride the storm superbly, unless her size caused the ocean to overflow.

Leimann likewise hurried through the streets in his helmet to offer apologies for his conduct last night.

When twilight fell the majority of the officers were gathered in the casino for an evening drink discussing yesterday's *fête* and subjecting those who had taken part in it to more or less trenchant criticism. Borgert had much to say in his most bantering tone of the latest development between Frau Kahle and the now absent Kolberg. Nothing had escaped his lynx eye, which was even penetrating enough to see what passed behind a garden screen.

Meanwhile the object of his satire was sitting comfortably beside the stove in his room, with Frau Kahle on his knee.

Her longing to see him was so irresistible, that on the pretext of having shopping to do, she had escaped from her husband, and, under the cover of dusk, had hurried to the little garden at the other end of the

Life in a Garrison Town

town, where, beneath the tall chestnuts, stood the little house that Kolberg occupied. This venture met with such success that it seemed well worth while to repeat it as often as possible. It was infinitely preferable to pass a cosy hour indoors than to take walks together, for in this tiny, gossipy hole everyone was on the look-out, and people were as pleased as Punch when they got hold of a tit-bit of gossip which their neighbours had not heard. The very trees in the wood could not be trusted, for hadn't it happened once that a non-commissioned officer had dropped down from the top of an elm, at the foot of which another man was making love to his sweetheart, and given him a sound thrashing! Besides, the weather for the most part was atrociously cold, and warmth is conducive to love.

She met scarcely anyone after her shopping. When she passed through the dark almost deserted streets she turned her steps in the direction of the isolated lonely little house.

The happy pair of lovers never thought of being on their guard with the servant, who was despatched on these occasions either into the town or to the barracks. It soon struck

Life in a Garrison Town

him as odd, however, that he was sent on these errands regularly on Mondays and Thursdays. It dawned on him that they were only an excuse to get him out of the way, for the commissions he was sent on were suspiciously strange and unnecessary. So one day he stationed himself behind a tree, and not a little to his amazement he beheld the wife of Captain Kahle coolly walk into his lieutenant's house. His curiosity gradually increased, and he began to make a custom of hiding beneath the window and listening through the thin panes to every word that passed, or from the branches of a neighbouring tree he would get a bird's-eye view of the interior of the room. He was so astonished at what he saw that at last he felt obliged to unburden himself in the canteen. There he found an appreciative audience who roared with laughter. But merriment reached its highest pitch when Kolberg's faithful servant produced from his pocket-book a hair-pin that he had found in his lieutenant's apartment, and, handing it over to Kahle's orderly, playfully requested it might be restored to the lady who owned it. Kolberg's servant now became an interesting personality, for he had more enthrall-

Life in a Garrison Town

ing things to relate than Leimann's. The latter had much to tell, it is true, about his mistress and Borgert; but there were gaps in his story, because the servant-girl was keeping the result of her most interesting observations up her sleeve. She expected that a time might be coming when it would prove a trump-card which would bring forth not only the wages due to her but a substantial extra reward.

Thus several months went by. The secret of Kolberg's intimacy with Frau Kahle had by degrees leaked out, and was being chattered about in every circle and commented on in all the beer-cellars of the little town.

Kolberg's brother officers knew all about it, but not one of them was inclined to raise a scandal for which there existed so little positive proof. The two people concerned would deny the charges as slander, and that would place the man who brought the charges in the wrong, for having wantonly attacked the honour of a fellow officer, and what was worse, the honour of a lady of the regiment. The consequences might be serious if it came into court, for who could be sure that Kolberg's servant, the single witness of the intrigue, would abide by his statements when

Life in a Garrison Town

brought to book. It was quite within the bounds of probability that out of fear of punishment he would repudiate having played the eavesdropper, or put a different and much more harmless construction on the affair. He might even deny having seen anything at all.

On the other hand, one naturally dreaded the mud that would be stirred up by a revelation of the affair which would involve the dismissal of a comrade and the inevitable duel. Captain Kahle was universally popular; why then make things so unpleasant for him?

So the matter was left alone till gossip became so general, especially in the town, that Captain König resolved at least to give the commandant a private hint.

“Is this an official report?” asked the Colonel. “No? Then I will know nothing of it. I am not going to put my finger in any such unsavoury pie.”

König felt little disposed himself to take the initiative in bringing the scandal to light, and to get a challenge for his pains, so he too kept silent.

Thus it happened that no steps were taken in any quarter to end the talk, and a

Life in a Garrison Town

state of things was allowed to exist that reflected on the officers and was highly injurious to the repute of the regiment. In other classes of the community the offenders would certainly have been called to account, whereas in the army, which claims the highest privileges socially in the country by reason of the stainlessness of its morals and its irreproachable reputation, a situation which outraged every sense of decency and honour was patiently tolerated. It was Colonel von Kronau on whom rested the gravest responsibility. This gentleman, who never failed to punish with remorseless severity and harshness any breach of discipline so long as his own person had nothing to fear, was willing to suffer this slur to remain on the honour of the regiment under his command, for here he foresaw circumstances that might be personally unpleasant: either he might be made a party in a libel suit, or his position as Colonel would be compromised if his superiors got wind of what was going on in his regiment. He felt a decided distaste to both ideas.

Very welcome then was the news which he received one day in an official dispatch that Rittmeister Kahle had got his majority

Life in a Garrison Town

and was to be exchanged to a South German garrison. Now there would be an end of the whole unpleasant concern. He congratulated himself doubly on not having taken any hasty action, for a lucky turn of fate had relieved him of the trouble.

Kahle was delighted at his unexpectedly quick promotion. He had reached the goal of long years of steady work and honest endeavour. He felt now that he could face the future with more serenity, having turned that critical corner of promotion. He did not doubt that a military career that would offer him the best field for the exercise of his abilities lay before him. And then the change to a pleasant garrison — what more could he desire?

On the very next day after his promotion all the officers of the staff assembled at a farewell dinner in the casino. The Colonel, in honour of the promoted officer, ordained epaulettes, and the newly-made major looked particularly smart, in all the glory of his orders and fringes.

When the second course was over the Colonel rose and made the departing comrade a farewell speech couched in the most heartfelt expressions of admiration of his sterling

Life in a Garrison Town

military virtues and the qualities that had won him without exception the love and respect of his brother officers and men. He then presented him with the customary silver goblet with the name and number of the regiment engraved on it.

Kahle responded in a voice shaken with emotion. Mingled feelings of joy at his promotion and pain at parting from the comrades of the garrison which for so long had been the scene of his activity found an echo in his farewell words. Though he had often wished himself out of the God-forsaken little place, with all its petty gossip and vexations, now it came to the point it cut him to the heart to part for ever from the spot where for so many years he had honourably striven to serve his country.

The officers mustered in full force at the station on the following day at noon to see the Major off. When he had said good-bye to each, and the Colonel had embraced him, he turned to take leave of his wife and little boy. This farewell touched him so deeply that he could scarcely conceal the tears that rose to his eyes.

He felt an unusual tenderness for his wife in prospect of the new home started under

Life in a Garrison Town

the pleasantest conditions of his new position. She, too, would cure herself of her little faults in fresh surroundings, and forget the bitterness of having passed the best years of her young life in a little frontier town, the dullness and narrowness of which had often been irksome to her. He believed that so soon as she was settled in the charming South German garrison town their domestic life would become more agreeable. New impressions would rub off the angles and put an end to the small bickerings of their married life, for they were entirely attributable to the seclusion and *ennui* which were bound to make a woman of lively temperament discontented and captious.

Frau Kahle was to stay behind in the old garrison till the removal of the furniture was over, and Lieutenant Weil and his wife had begged her to accept their hospitality for the time being.

The plan suited Frau Kahle admirably, and she accepted the invitation with delight. It gave her an opportunity of enjoying Kolberg's society for a few days longer, unrestrained by the necessity of making excuses for her goings and comings. Perhaps she would be able to manage a whole day and

Life in a Garrison Town

even a night on the pretext of going a journey on business. Before parting for so long, it might be for ever, she must take a proper farewell of her lover, and drain the cup of pleasure to the dregs.

One day the Weils were sitting with their guest at four o'clock coffee when the orderly brought in a letter for Frau Kahle, which had been handed to him by the postman. She opened it, and, after glancing over it hurriedly, stuck it in the pocket of her coat with a slight blush.

"Frau Pastor Klein has written to invite me to coffee this afternoon," she explained. "She would like to see me again before I go away. Charming of her, isn't it? I think I had better go at once, or I shall be late."

She got up, emptied her cup standing, and then, with a smiling "*Au revoir* till this evening," danced to the door. A few minutes later Weil saw her from the window walking off hurriedly in the direction of the town.

"Extraordinary!" he exclaimed to his wife. "She hasn't had much intercourse with the pastor's wife before, scarcely knows her, indeed! I wonder if it's a ruse."

Life in a Garrison Town

“Pray let her go where she likes, Max,” Frau Weil answered indifferently. “It isn’t our business. In a few days she will be gone, and after all she is responsible, not we, for her actions.”

But Weil shook his head and went to his study.

At eight o’clock Frau Kahle had not come back, and they began to be anxious about their guest. What could have happened to her?

While the servant-girl was laying the table in the next room, the husband and wife went through the various possibilities that might account for their guest’s prolonged absence.

“Minna,” said Frau Weil, turning to the servant, “it will be best for you to go to the Frau Pastor’s house and inquire if Frau Major Kahle is there. I shall have no peace till I know where she is.”

“She cannot be at the Frau Pastor’s, madame,” the girl answered. “At about half-past four I saw the Gnädige Frau as I went to fetch the milk. She was in the avenue, and the Frau Pastor lives close to the church.”

“Then there is no object in sending to

Life in a Garrison Town

them," said the First Lieutenant with a shrug of his shoulders. "As I thought, it was only a ruse, so that she needn't say where she was going in reality. I know her little game."

"What do you know, Max?" his wife asked curiously. "Where do you think she can be?"

"She's at Kolberg's, or I'll eat my hat."

"But, Max, how can you say so? She surely wouldn't——"

"Wouldn't she, though. I tell you that's where she is."

Both were silent as the girl re-entered, put the tea-urn on the table, and then drew from her pocket a crumpled, three-cornered piece of paper, which she handed to Weil with a significant smirk.

"Perhaps, master, or you, mistress, have dropped this?"

While Minna withdrew the Lieutenant gazed at the note, his eyes wide with astonishment. Then, with a mocking laugh, he held the missive out to his wife.

"Kindly look at this, and be convinced. There it is in black and white."

Frau Weil took the paper somewhat hesitatingly, and read—

Life in a Garrison Town

“I shall expect you at half-past four to-day; to-morrow on duty.”

Address and signature there were none; but it was Kolberg's unmistakable handwriting.

“A pretty story! This is what we invited her for, then; to lie, and hoodwink us, and carry on her pranks under our very nose! Didn't I tell you we had better leave it alone? But you insisted on asking her. If you had only listened to me, I should have been spared the distasteful task of turning the baggage out of my house.”

“Good gracious, Max, you can't do anything of the kind. Put the letter in the fire.”

“Not I,” burst out Weil. “I'll kick her out of the house. Do you think I am going to keep a refuge for abandoned women? She can go where she pleases. I decline the privilege of entertaining her any longer; and the letter shall not be put in the fire, but shall be laid before a Court of Honour!”

Weil strode up and down the room, his hands in his pockets. His stern glance betrayed his anger and resolution.

“If I may be allowed to give you a word of advice,” his wife urged, “it is to put the

Life in a Garrison Town

letter in the fire, and to hush up the whole matter. In two days she will be gone, and all will be at an end. Don't mix yourself up in it, for it will only involve you in untold embarrassments—and think of the poor Major."

"I shall do as I said, and nothing will shake my determination. You are no judge of an affair like this. I will not countenance this creature in carrying on her intrigue with that cur Kolberg from under my roof. She ought at least to have had enough sense of decency left to stop her game while she was receiving hospitality in a respectable house. Such horrible, scandalous behaviour is unheard of."

Frau Weil gave up trying to prevail with her husband, for she knew his temper too well, and how implacable he was when he had made up his mind to anything. She knitted her brows and looked thoughtfully into the fire, which glowed red in the stove and cast flickering shadows on the carpet.

The servant-girl came in and announced that supper was ready.

"Tell us, Minna—where did you find the letter?" the Lieutenant asked her.

"It was lying in the corridor near the hat-

Life in a Garrison Town

stand. It must have fallen out of someone's pocket."

"Very well; you can go."

The couple sat down to the table in silence. Weil maintained his angry expression, and his wife, with lowered eyelids, did not look up from her plate until she heard Frau Kahle's voice in the corridor. Then she cast an anxious glance at her husband.

"She is coming, Max. And please, for Heaven's sake, don't make a scene. Think of the servants — they can hear everything!"

Weil did not answer or look towards the door as their guest made her appearance.

Her face was flushed, and her eyes shone with a dewy brilliance. Her fair hair was ruffled, and a shell hairpin was falling out from the knot at the back of her head. Two buttons of her flimsy summer blouse were unfastened, showing beneath a corner of dainty white lace.

"Good evening, everybody," she exclaimed in a lively voice as she entered the room. "Excuse my being so late; but Frau Klein persuaded me to go into town with her. We were rather late back. It was delightful! We went to a café and made some purchases."

Life in a Garrison Town

Weil rose stiffly and confronted his guest. "Gnädige Frau," he said quietly, "it is quite unnecessary on your part to seek for reasons to explain your absence this evening. The letter which came for you this afternoon, and which by an accident has fallen into our hands, is sufficient proof that you have abused the hospitality accorded to you in a most shameful manner! May I therefore ask you to quit my house as soon as possible, in fact to-morrow morning at latest? This evening you will kindly leave us to ourselves."

With a chilling bow he returned to his seat at the table.

Frau Kahle stood for a moment as if turned to stone in the dimly-lighted part of the room; then she grasped her pocket spasmodically — her hand sought something, but in vain, and the Frau Major turned to the door in silence and walked to her room, the door of which she banged furiously behind her.

After supper the Lieutenant went to his writing-table, lit his lamp with the green shade, and seated himself in the arm-chair. He took a large sheet of white paper from one of the drawers, dipped his pen in the

Life in a Garrison Town

ink, and then laid it down and meditated. For half an hour he lay back in his chair contemplating the sheet of white paper. Then he seized the penholder and began to write.

His wife sat meanwhile in the corner of the sofa with her embroidery and a very distressed expression on her face. Now and then she threw a glance at her husband as his pen scratched rapidly over the paper. At last the document was finished. Weil once more leaned back in his chair and looked meditatively before him. Then he read over what he had written, folded it up, and enclosed it with the guilty note in a yellow envelope, which he sealed. Afterwards he shut up his writing-materials in the drawer again, blew out the lamp, and went to sit beside his wife on the sofa, where he was soon deep in the newspaper.

Frau Kahle departed by the first train the next morning. No one knew her destination — not even the orderly who carried her box to the station, for neither in writing nor by word of mouth had she left behind her a word of thanks or apology.

At noon on the same day the unsuspecting Lieutenant Kolberg was summoned before

Life in a Garrison Town

his commanding officer and informed that proceedings were being instituted against him, and that he would be relieved of duty till further notice.

The excitement produced by these events among the officers may be imagined. Every one of them felt a sort of malicious satisfaction that the unpleasant affair had come out and was known beyond their own circle, for not one of them was particularly partial to Kolberg, who had been secretive, and had withdrawn himself altogether from the gaieties of the casino. Much less was there any sympathy for the coquettish Frau Kahle. Borgert especially, though he condemned Weil's action in the strongest terms, did not refrain from criticising severely the relations between Kolberg and Frau Kahle. The culprit was spoken of by his brother officers in language which in print would hardly pass muster in polite circles, and it was unanimously resolved to "cut" the "blackguardly deceiver and low hypocrite."

Colonel von Kronau was in a great fright on the morning that Captain Stark had appeared with the warrant from the Court of Honour and Weil's documents. He turned over in his mind what was to be done to put

Life in a Garrison Town

the least objectionable face on the affair. But now it had passed into the hands of the Court, who were bound, according to rule, to examine and sift the facts. So there was nothing for it but to confine himself to cursing the meddling Lieutenant Weil, who had let him in for the detestable business, and to register a vow that he should have cause to remember it when the time came for writing his conduct report.

The Colonel was so worried that in imagination he pictured himself living in retirement on his estate, superintending the unloading of a hay-waggon.

Most of all to be pitied was poor Major Kahle. He had at last gained what for many years he had worked and struggled to attain, and now with one blow his success was turned into disgrace through the conduct of his unprincipled wife.

He had no idea what had become of her, for she had considered it advisable, not being sure of a friendly reception, to keep out of his way. She had sent her small son to his grandparents, and in lodgings in Berlin was killing time with writing letters full of reproaches to Kolberg, and in gadding about the streets. Kahle was firmly resolved to

Life in a Garrison Town

shut the door in his unfaithful wife's face should she attempt to set foot in his house, and was meanwhile making his application for divorce.

But it was the thought of the inevitable duel which weighed most heavily upon him. Because his wife had deceived him in the most outrageous manner, he was bound in honour to risk being shot down by the bullet of her seducer. Rather should the shameless wretch have been deprived of his position as officer and sent to some gaol to reflect on the grossness of his conduct.

He must fight to clear his wife's honour. How absurd, he thought to himself. Has a woman a rag of reputation left, a spark of honour, who deliberately deceives her husband for the sake of the first man who desires her charms? She was nothing more or less than an ignoble prostitute. Yet for such a woman he must risk his life in a duel. What a ridiculous farce! He began to wonder if there was any way of avoiding the contest. Not out of cowardice or fear of death did he wish to avoid it—he was no coward, but he could not see why the fruits of his strenuous efforts, the future of his child, and his own life should be hazarded

Life in a Garrison Town

because another man had behaved like a despicable scoundrel. It was conceivable that he might be killed by his adversary in the encounter, in which case an innocent man would suffer death, the heaviest penalty that can be inflicted, while the criminal would get off scot-free, and let another expiate his sin.

Gradually he realised that there was no way of eluding a combat with deadly weapons. If he declined to send his opponent a challenge, a court martial would certainly cashier him from the army, because he had failed to maintain the honour of his position. If he took part in a duel and escaped with his life, he would be punished with fortress-arrest. The last alternative seemed the lesser of two evils. As he was forced to take the measure, he made up his mind to show no consideration for the man who had destroyed his peace and disgraced his house. He would challenge the scoundrel to a duel, to be fought under the severest regulations, and either kill him or compel him to take the life he had already ruined. The Court of Honour were engaged on the proceedings for several months. Things came out that must have been both interesting and instructive to the younger officers of the

Life in a Garrison Town

corps, and a particularly doubtful light was thrown on Lieutenant Kolberg's ideas of honour and friendship.

The behaviour of the officers before the catastrophe also gave food for reflection, and must have seemed rather strange. Since things had come out Kolberg had been sent to Coventry by his brother officers, and was only seen in the neighbourhood of the garrison on horseback.

But one day Borgert happened to find himself in financial straits. In desperation at every other source failing him, he made an application to Kolberg for a loan. The latter was well aware of Borgert's influence among the younger officers, and did not fail to take advantage of this opportunity of winning him over. He eagerly lent the thousand marks required by Borgert, raising the money on security of his own thoroughbred.

Borgert was not slow to prove his gratitude. A few days later he had convinced them all at mess that Kolberg possessed excellent qualities as a comrade, and ridiculed the present development of the situation between him and his superior officers. Thus the young lieutenant, suspended though he

Life in a Garrison Town

was from serving in the army, became in request again both as guest and as host. When he entertained his friends he boasted over the sparkling champagne of the forthcoming duel, and seemed cock-sure that he was going to run Kahle through.

In this manner he grew to be the hero of the hour and famous for the daring gallantry which had won a "lady" in a case where his brother officers would have had to be content with a "woman of the town."

But on the day Kahle's challenge arrived his mood was a little more modest.

"Distance, fifteen paces, rifle pistols with sight and exchange of bullets, till one or other of the combatants is disabled."

He had not anticipated this, and the conditions under which the duel was to be fought were anything but what he would have chosen. Kahle was known to be a dead shot, and his reputation as a great sportsman even outside the garrison extended far and wide.

So Kolberg took expeditions into the wood every day to practise shooting in order to be better prepared to meet his opponent on the day of the contest.

As he discharged one bullet after the

Life in a Garrison Town

other into the trunk of the innocent beech, it came into his mind that perhaps he would not hit the Major, because he had deceived and sinned against him. It was the last flicker of a guilty conscience rapidly becoming dead to all sense of right and duty. His scruples were soon overcome by a more powerful sentiment—the mad clinging to life, the life which the more he contemplated the possibility of losing seemed to him the more full of attractions; and a voice within him cried, “You do not want to die, you want to live—live.”

And so the best way out of it was to stretch his opponent on the sand.

It was not till four months had passed away that the Court of Honour pronounced sentence. Kolberg was dismissed from the service; but when this verdict was sent to be ratified by His Majesty it was accompanied by a recommendation that the officer should be graciously pardoned and reinstated. The duel was accepted in principle, but not the conditions proposed by Kahle. It was probably feared that a bloody issue to the affair would create too great a sensation. There had been many cases of late in which the death of one or other of the duellists had

Life in a Garrison Town

had very serious consequences for those superior officers who had not interfered to prevent the duel or to soften its conditions. The amended challenge therefore was as follows:—

Thirty-five paces distance, a single exchange of bullets with smooth bore pistols and without sights.

Kahle was thus not allowed a chance of avenging the outrage on the honour of his household, because the gentlemen in authority were too wary and careful of their own skin to permit his obtaining the proper satisfaction.

† This duel was simply a farce — a fatal issue could only be the result of an accident. Borgert accepted with delight Kolberg's invitation to act as his second. He did not object in the least to being the spectator of a dangerous combat which involved no danger to himself. He also hoped that by rendering Kolberg this service to be able to keep him waiting a long time before repaying the thousand marks. All Kolberg's cronies assembled at his table for a carousal on the eve of his departure for the town in South Germany, the neighbourhood of which was to be the scene of the duel. Kolberg was so

Life in a Garrison Town

much the worse for drink that his servant had the greatest difficulty in getting him out of bed in the morning in time to catch the train.

It was the same with Borgert, who, as he stood on the platform could not shake off the impression that the occasion was a festive one. He naturally, under the circumstances, had forgotten to supply himself with money for the journey, and generously accepted the hundred mark note which Kolberg pressed into his hand.

Through the chill air of early morning two carriages drove briskly in the direction of the shooting-ground of Major Kahle's garrison. The sun was rising above the mountain-tops in the East, and its first rays lay aslant the far-stretching stubble fields. Nature, clothed in her autumn glory, seemed profoundly peaceful, and deep silence reigned in the forest, broken only now and again by the falling of a faded leaf as it whirled softly through the dry branches to find its grave on the ground.

Borgert, Kolberg and two physicians were seated in one carriage, in the other were Kahle, his second, and the two members of the Court of Honour who were to act as

Life in a Garrison Town

neutral witnesses of the combat. The case of pistols was under the back seat.

From the high road the carriages turned into a lane so narrow that the branches of the trees on either side constantly swept against the windows. They drew up on an open space. The occupants of the carriages got out and the coachmen received orders to drive back and wait at the entrance to the forest.

The little party then walked for about five minutes down a small pathway and collected near the shooting butt, which was situated farther in the forest. The case of pistols was laid on a mound, and the seconds took out and loaded the weapons and then tested them.

The doctors spread out their instruments, and unwound yards of bandages, while the neutral spectators measured the distance in strides, sticking their swords in the slightly frozen ground to mark the spot where the combatants were to stand. According to usage, an effort was made to reconcile the duellists at the last moment, which, of course, failed; and they took up their position opposite each other by the swords.

Kahle looked pale and worn, as if he had

Life in a Garrison Town

not slept all night. He shivered with cold, and his nervously twitching features betrayed violent emotion.

Kolberg, on the contrary, appeared to be at his ease, and almost smiling. He threw away the stump of the cigarette he had been smoking with a careless gesture.

One of the bystanders then briefly stated the order of combat, saying that the shots must be fired between "one" and "three."

After a pause came the exclamation, "Ready!"

Both combatants held their pistols pointing towards the ground, to raise them and take aim at "one." Simultaneously with "two" Kahle's shot was fired, and the bullet pierced with a clattering sound the bark of a beech-tree, bringing down a withered branch. His hand had trembled and been so unsteady that he had shot quite a yard over Kolberg's head. The latter stood firm and immovable, not taking aim till the last moment. The trigger of his pistol clicked at "three."

Kahle looked unflinchingly at the little black mouth of his opponent's pistol, but after the report his eyes opened wide, and he staggered and fell to the earth. Kolberg

Life in a Garrison Town

felt a cold shudder creep down his spine at the sight of this great strong man falling backwards. For an instant he stood as if stunned, and the weapon dropped from his hand.

The others at once hurried to the Major's side, and the doctors ripped open his coat.

A stream of blood trickled from a small wound in the middle of his chest.

Kahle only lost consciousness for a minute. He lay there now very pale, with his eyes fixed steadily on those gathered round him. Kolberg came forward, stretching out his hand to the Major, but he reeled back as if he had been struck when he met the cold disdainful look of refusal in the Major's glazing eyes. He stood by his victim for a moment, then turned on his heel and walked away into the forest.

The Major's wound was pronounced not dangerous, but the bullet had slightly injured one of his lungs, and it would be a long time before it healed.

A carriage was fetched, and the Major gently lifted into it. The doctors got in too. Kahle's second climbed to the box beside the coachman, and they drove slowly back to the town to get the injured man into hospital without delay.

Life in a Garrison Town

Kolberg's depressed spirits were not of long duration. When he and Borgert at the entrance of the town parted from the other occupants of their carriage, his companion slapped him on the shoulder and exclaimed cheerily —

“Come, now, don't pull such a long face, old man. Congratulate yourself that you have escaped with a whole skin. You can't help having hit the poor devil in the chest. It was he challenged you, not you him. I vote that we have breakfast now. I am not accustomed to rambling about a forest so early in the morning, and my stomach cries out.”

“I am sorry that I hit the poor Major ; I wish I had not done it,” Kolberg answered in a serious voice. “Devil take the women. They are at the bottom of everything. Why did I have anything to do with this Kahle woman?”

“You needn't worry about that. The Major is alone to blame. He should have looked after his gay and pretty wife better, and then she wouldn't have become no better than she ought to be. To-day she takes up with one, to-morrow with another, so it's no crime on your part to have amused yourself

Life in a Garrison Town

a little at her expense. We must treat women according to their merits.”

The voluble Borgert thus succeeded by degrees in cheering up Kolberg, who, in his heart, agreed with what he said, and felt no disgust at the vile heartlessness of the other's brutal words, for they were birds of a feather.

They changed into plain dress at their hotel, and went to breakfast in a restaurant, where the waiters, only half awake, were dusting the chairs, and stared in astonishment at the early risers. Beginning the day with cognac, the pair ended it at night with champagne in a café of ill-fame. Anyone who saw these lieutenants in mufti, chaffing the brazen waitresses, could easily believe that the grave events of the morning had ceased to weigh upon their spirits, and that they had completely regained the ordinary composure of an untroubled conscience.

On their return to the garrison the next day the two heroes of the duel received a tremendous ovation. A number of officers met them at the station and accompanied Kolberg to his house, where in honour of his success they indulged freely in drink. The other officers, especially the elder ones,

Life in a Garrison Town

held that Kolberg showed very bad taste in entertaining a party directly he came back, instead of wishing to be alone to meditate on the sad outcome of his dastardly conduct.

Two days later the ratification of the verdict came from Berlin. Though Kolberg's rehabilitation was sanctioned, he was ordered at once to another garrison, as he could scarcely remain on the scene of his former exploits any longer. However, before starting for the beautiful town on the Rhine where he was to be stationed for the future, he was obliged to bend his steps in the direction of a fortress, in which he was to reside for a month or two as punishment for having taken part in a duel with "weapons that were dangerous to life." The Major's recovery was very slow. The two army surgeons had decided to extract the bullet, which was lodged near the vertebrate column, but the operation had been not altogether successful. Though the bullet had been removed, acute inflammation had set up in the wound, which caused intense pain and a persistent high temperature. At the end of the winter, when the Major came out of hospital, he was a complete wreck, both mentally and physically, and forced to resign

Life in a Garrison Town

his commission, being incapable any longer of bearing the fatigue of military service.

He, too, was sentenced to three months' detention in a fortress, but after two days he was released, the exigencies of the law being satisfied.

So Kahle in the prime of his manhood saw his worldly prospects blasted. He could never be much better than an invalid, and must look for employment in some other calling of life, for his scanty pension was not enough for himself and his son to live on comfortably. The private fortune his wife had brought him on their marriage reverted to her after the divorce.

And why had all this happened? Because custom had compelled him to vindicate his wife's honour. For her sake he had sacrificed himself. The Major only realised how worthy she was of such a sacrifice when he heard that his divorced wife was "keeping house" for a young baron in Berlin.

Kolberg meanwhile managed to enjoy life to the full on the banks of the beautiful Rhine.

CHAPTER V

IN his sumptuous quarters Lieutenant Borgert sat at his writing-table. Before him lay a sheet of paper covered with figures, and around him was quite a mountain of papers, bills and coloured envelopes.

He seized one account after the other, noting down the figures he found thereon on the sheet before him, and had already begun the third row, when, suddenly stopping, he threw the pencil on the table. He crushed the papers together as if they were a pack of rubbish, threw them into the fire, when they at once began to flare up, and a few minutes later lay crackling in their ashes.

He had had the praiseworthy resolution for once, far from his usual custom of simply throwing all his bills unopened in the fire, to add them up in order to gain something like an idea of the amount and size of his debts.

But it was not possible to make his way through the endless heap of angry and threatening letters, writs and demands for

Life in a Garrison Town

payment. But at any rate it had become evident to him that it was out of the question to think of meeting his debts, because the amount considerably exceeded even what he had supposed. He had already reckoned up eleven thousand marks, and in addition to this there was the heap of bills which he had just consigned to the flames.

But the seven hundred marks which he still owed to Captain König pressed the most heavily upon him ; other sums also troubled him much, for they were debts of honour, and the first for 2300 marks would be due in six weeks. How could he meet it without theft ?

He began to deliberate. He had already given a bill of sale over his furniture ; one of his horses was pledged twice over, and for the other, his old charger, he would scarcely get three hundred marks, and that would be only a drop in the ocean. He had no longer a single friend from whom he could successfully attempt to borrow, except possibly König. But how could he again approach the latter with such a request ? He could not well do that before at least refunding him his seven hundred marks. The only hope was to try to get a loan from the

Life in a Garrison Town

money-lender in Berlin, but the fellow had not answered his letter, although he had already been in possession of Lieutenant Leimann's surety for three weeks, and an insurance policy for over 20,000 marks.

For the present that could not help him. He wanted to try and quiet his more pressing creditors, and only if possible to pay something on account of those debts for which he could be summoned or brought before his Colonel. Perhaps the future would bring something — a lucky game of cards, a big prize in the lottery, or perhaps even a rich bride.

These hopes again put him in a good humour; he lit a cigarette and whistled to himself as he walked up and down over the thick carpet.

A sound in the corridor drew his attention. He heard a voice whispering and steps on the hall-carpet, then somebody knocked softly at the door.

It must be Frau Leimann, he said to himself, for she often came at tea-time to her lover while her husband went out for his evening drink.

In answer to his "Come in," a poorly-dressed woman with a basket on her arm

Life in a Garrison Town

crossed the threshold. Upon her youthful face care and sorrow had stamped premature lines, and she looked with frightened eyes at the Lieutenant, who remained standing in the room and was looking at her with undisguised displeasure.

“What are you doing here again, Frau Meyer?” Borgert blustered. “I have told you that I shall give you no more washing to do.”

“Excuse me, sir, I only wanted to know if you can pay me the forty marks to-day, or at least some of it. I must have money, my husband has been ill in bed these three weeks and cannot go to work.”

“Your eternal dunning!” he roughly answered. “Come again this evening; I must get change and have no time now.”

“But keep your word this time, sir; you have so often promised me the money.”

Saying this she quietly opened the door and went out. Borgert however flung open the window to let in the fresh autumn air. The atmosphere of the poor was unbearable to him; it was always musty and unpleasant, like mildew. He took a bottle of perfume from the carved cupboard and sprinkled its contents on the Persian carpet and on the

Life in a Garrison Town

cushions of the chairs. Then he rang for his man.

He came immediately. It was Private Röse, whom the Captain would no longer have in the ranks because he was so unreliable, and owing to his deficient sense of duty injured the discipline of the squadron.

“What have I ordered you to do, you swine?” the Lieutenant roared at him.

“That I should let no one in unannounced,” he answered timidly, “but the woman pushed by me, and I could not prevent her entering.”

“Take your carcass away, you lazy brute, you! Let nobody in before asking me first. If you do I’ll give you a good thrashing, you swine, you.”

Then he struck Röse in the face with both hands, opened the door, and kicked him out.

“If that woman comes again this evening, tell her I have gone out!” he called after him.

Borgert had just settled down, newspaper in hand, by the window as the hall bell again rang. It was a short, energetic ring. The man came in, his face swollen with tears, and announced:

Life in a Garrison Town

“A man wants to speak to you on important business.”

“What is his name? You should always ask the name.”

The man went out but returned very soon.

“He will not give his name, but he says he absolutely must speak with you, sir.”

“Let him come in.”

A moment later a man entered with a leather bag under his arm, and introduced himself as Krause, the Court bailiff.

“Excuse me, sir, if I disturb you. I have a summons for you. Thank you!”

Upon which he took a thick envelope from his bag and handed it to Borgert, who, however, without losing his self-command, answered pleasantly :

“Oh, I know what it is! In any case I paid it only yesterday. It is only a small sum which I owe to my tailor.”

“As far as my knowledge goes it is a question of a summons on a bill of exchange from Fröhlich & Co., and the amount is four thousand marks for furniture delivered.”

“Oh, that is the thing! The good man could have spared himself the trouble. The amount was sent by my bankers the day before yesterday.”

Life in a Garrison Town

“So much the better,” laughed the official. “I have the honour to wish you good day!”

“Good day, Herr Krause; I should say come again if your visit were not such a doubtful pleasure.”

As soon as the man was outside, Borgert tore open the envelope and glanced through the contents of the document.

Matters were now desperate. The furniture was not yet paid for and already pledged, although in the contract of sale it was definitely stated that the goods remained the property of the vendor till entirely paid for.

Four thousand marks! What a heap of money! He must speak with Leimann; perhaps something could yet be done.

Suddenly it occurred to him that the bailiff had not yet left the premises. So he called his servant and asked:

“Where has the man gone?”

“Upstairs, Herr Lieutenant.”

Whatever could he have to do there? Could Leimann be in the same hole as he? That would be a dreadful thing, for Leimann had always been a kind of support, either by being security for promised payment or helping to quiet the creditors.

Life in a Garrison Town

In the meantime Herr Krause had served a summons from Weinstein & Co. on Frau Leimann for four hundred marks which she owed that firm for a silk dress.

She was desperate and began pacing up and down the room like a mad thing. What was to be done? Where get the money? She would beg Borgert to give her the amount. But what would he think of her? Would he not lose all respect for her?

For a moment she stood irresolute in the room, pressing both hands to her beating heart. Then she resolutely went to the door and hurried down the back stairs.

She found Borgert in his chair brooding; he did not even rise as she entered, but greeted her with a wave of his hand. She came up to him and kissed him tenderly on his forehead, then sat down on his knee, while he, placing his arm round her slender waist, looked questioningly in her face.

“What strange visitor have you just received?” he asked, half jokingly, after a short pause.

“I — a visitor?” answered Frau Leimann in some confusion. “I have received nobody.” Her eyes continually wandered round the room.

Life in a Garrison Town

“You have received nobody? Oh, you little story-teller!”

“Whatever are you thinking about, George? Who should visit me?”

“Oh, I only thought a certain Herr Krause.”

“How do you know that?” she asked, startled.

“I know all, my child, even that the bailiff has just been with you.”

Frau Leimann looked down in confusion and plucked at her apron.

“Well, if you already know, there is no necessity for me to tell you. Yes, he came to see me.”

“What did he want?”

“They have summoned me for a paltry four hundred marks,” the woman sobbed. “I am lost if my husband hears of it!”

“But he must pay for what he has bought you.”

“He doesn’t know about it. I wanted to have the dress, the red silk one, you know? I told him at the time my mother had sent it or he would not have allowed me to have it; but I wanted to have it, so I had it put down to my account.”

“That was very silly, my dear! How will you get the money?”

Life in a Garrison Town

“ I don't know! Can't you help me? ”

“ I will go to the people and ask them to wait a bit.”

“ That would be of no use, George — I must have ready money ; at least a thousand marks, for I have other things to pay for: the dressmaker, the hairdressers, and others. Get the money for me, George; show me now that you love me as you have always said.”

“ I? ” laughed Borgert cynically. “ My God, I don't know myself what to do.”

“ What do you mean? Are you also in debt? ”

“ Perhaps you would like to look into the accounts on the writing-table. Such things I receive every day.”

Frau Leimann went to the writing-table, opened the papers and looked with wide open eyes at the figures.

“ In Heaven's name, George! What will become of me? You were my only hope, now I am lost.”

She sank on the sofa, and, covering her face with her hands, sobbed.

“ Don't be so frightened, you timid little hare; you will not die for a few hundred marks,” said Borgert, trying to comfort her

Life in a Garrison Town

and tenderly stroking her blonde hair. "I will see what I can do, and in a week you shall have the thousand marks."

Instead of answering she flung her arms round Borgert's neck and kissed him passionately.

"I knew it," she then said — "I knew you would not leave me in the lurch, dear one, good old fellow!" — and she drew the Lieutenant down on the sofa near her.

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When Leimann returned after having finished his evening drink he found all the rooms dark and empty.

To his question as to where his wife was the servant answered:

"My mistress has gone out."

"Where?"

"I don't know, sir."

He then lighted a lamp and went to the letter-box to see if anything had come by the evening post. He found two letters — bills — amounting together to over six hundred marks.

He muttered a little to himself and then locked the two bothering objects in his desk. But a large yellow envelope caught his eye. He took it for a letter of instructions and

Life in a Garrison Town

began to open it mechanically. But it was already opened, and his curiosity increased as he drew out three large sheets of paper.

With strained eyes he read through the type-written letters, then he sat down to the table and read the document from beginning to end.

His wife as well? That was indeed a delightful surprise! If that was the case with her own cash then there was nothing to expect from his mother-in-law, and he had always reckoned upon her. He threw the summons furiously in a corner and went up and down the room deliberating.

His wife must have heard the footsteps of her husband overhead, for she entered the room, cheeks burning.

"Excuse me, Max," said she breathlessly. "I had something important to do at the dressmaker's; I have run very fast; I saw you in front, but could not catch you up."

"What were you again doing at the dressmaker's?" he cried.

"Why should I go there except to have a dress made? She is making me a riding-habit."

"First pay for your old stuff and then have new finery made!" thundered her husband.

Life in a Garrison Town

“What do you mean by such a tone? And who told you that I don't pay my bills? You think perhaps that others are as thoughtless as you are.”

“If you don't want me to know what the bailiff brings for you why do you stick it under my nose?”

At first Frau Leimann did not grasp what he meant by this, then it flashed across her mind that she had left the summons lying on her husband's desk.

“I positively forbid you to poke your nose into my affairs,” continued she indignantly. “Even if the letter did lie open on your desk, you had no right to read it. I don't open your bills.”

“Do what you like, but I forbid your dragging the bailiff into this house.”

“There's no harm in that, my dear, for it will show him the way when he next comes to you.”

“Hold your tongue, you shameless baggage, or I will turn you out of doors!”

“Many thanks for your kind offer, but I am just going out of my own accord.”

She went out and into her bedroom and went to bed. But she was not at all tired, and so took a book which was lying on her

Life in a Garrison Town

table and began to read. In the room below her lay Borgert in bed, and he was also reading. But his thoughts were not upon the book. The fact that he was hemmed in on all sides gave him no rest. If much more happened the Colonel would order an immediate payment of all debts, and if that were impossible would compel him to send in his papers. That would be a fearful thing, for what could he do without a penny, no knowledge, and many requirements. Energetic steps must be taken at once, and he determined to make use of the next day, a Sunday, again to do all possible to raise a large loan.

Comforted in the hope that some friendly hand would do him a good turn, he fell asleep, the book falling from his grasp and the lamp on the table going out of itself after midnight, for Borgert had forgotten to extinguish it.

When he awoke the next morning it was past ten o'clock.

He was furious. Half a day was lost, and he had made up his mind to do so much! Why had that ass of a fellow not called him? His head ached, and he felt jaded and exhausted. Hurrying on a few clothes, he

Life in a Garrison Town

went to his man's room and found Röse writing a letter. He rose startled as his master entered.

“Why didn't you wake me up, you beast?” thundered he to the frightened fellow.

“I woke you at seven o'clock, sir, but you wanted to go to sleep, and said I needn't come again.”

“You are lying, you hog, you! I will teach you to do what I tell you.” Upon which he seized the sheath of a sabre lying on the bed and struck the fellow violently.

Röse stood to attention and submitted to the ill-treatment without a wink. That angered Borgert the more, and so he struck him again on his chest with his fist. Then he took the letter Röse had been writing, crumpled it, and threw it into the coal-scuttle.

“Go to Lieutenant Leimann and tell him I beg him to come to me in half an hour.”

“At your service, sir.”

Borgert returned to his bed-room, dressed himself, and then went into the next room.

But there stood the coffee, already quite cold. So Röse had been in the room before. But a little thrashing would do no harm. It kept up discipline and respect even if given

Life in a Garrison Town

for once at the wrong time. Should he ask Röse's pardon? He would see him further.

On the writing-table lay several letters. There were three bills and a letter from his father.

He opened it and read :

“MY DEAR SON, — I have learned with sorrow by your last letter that you have again incurred large debts which have placed you in difficulties because they had escaped your notice. Willingly as I would have sent you the money you ask for, I cannot do so, because you know how I must consider every penny. If 75 marks can help you they are at your disposal, although I had promised this money to your mother for a new dress which she has needed a long time. But I must tell you plainly that I cannot understand why with two hundred marks besides your pay you cannot make both ends meet. At your age I had no more, and yet saved enough to take an enjoyable holiday every year. I advise you, with the best intentions on my part, to withdraw somewhat from the society of your companions, that your expenditure may be less, to occupy yourself industriously at home, and avoid every occasion which requires you to spend money which you cannot afford. If you explain frankly that this or that is too expensive, everybody will respect you more if they see that you live according to your means and not recklessly.

Life in a Garrison Town

To live respectably means to live within your income.

“Let me know soon how you have settled the affair, and if I am to send you the sum I have offered. Hoping that no unpleasantness will arise, I am,
YOUR OLD FATHER.”

When Borgert had read these lines he crushed the paper together and threw it with the other three unopened letters into the fire. Then, with a deep sigh, he fell into a chair and looked thoughtfully before him. Then his man entered and announced Leimann.

Borgert got up to meet his friend, who, when he had entered the room, said excitedly —

“What have you so important to say so early in the morning?”

Borgert stood with his legs apart and said, with feigned hilarity —

“My dear fellow, everybody has his troubles. I am pretty well at the last gasp, and should like to name you my trustee in bankruptcy.”

“At your last gasp? What do you mean by it? Is it a matter of money?”

“You have guessed right. I must have money at once, a whole sackful, or I am done for.”

Life in a Garrison Town

“Are things so bad all of a sudden? Is there anything new? You told me last time that for the present you were all right.”

“Of course I said so, but yesterday I counted up and found that there was no other way except to negotiate a large loan. I should like to speak to you about it, for I hope that ways and means will be found to keep my head above water.”

Leimann looked thoughtfully down and rubbed his unshaven chin, then, shrugging his shoulders, said:

“How much is it then?”

“Twelve thousand marks, not a penny less, for I must have a clear start. I am sick of these eternal summonses and threatening letters.”

“And how have you thought of arranging matters?”

“I have the addresses of some money-lenders. If you would again back some bills for me I hope we can manage things.”

“Back bills! Come, come, my dear fellow, there must be an end to what one can do. I tell you plainly, if you cannot pay me the three thousand marks from last month, there is an end to my security.”

“That needs no explanation; it is abso-

Life in a Garrison Town

lutely a matter of necessity that I should meet my obligations.”

“I don’t doubt it; but indeed I cannot be security for you any more — indeed I wanted to ask you to do the same service for me; I must also have money.”

“I am quite willing; but why don’t you raise money on your wife’s dowry? That is the surest way.”

“First I must possess it to raise money on it.”

“But on what did you marry?” asked Borgert, astonished.

“I only had some money for four weeks, until I gained the Colonel’s consent, then the man who lent it me insisted on being paid back.”

Borgert looked at his friend in amazement, then he strode the room with long steps.

“Well,” he began, after a little pause, “all right; you go surety for me and I for you.”

“Very well; but still it is rather risky, for when it comes to the pinch and neither of us has any money it will be a bad look-out.”

“Such a case cannot happen, my dear fellow, for if I can get out of the hole this

Life in a Garrison Town

time there will be nothing more to fear. I will marry."

"The devil! You mean to do that! Then be careful how you choose a father-in-law, or it will be a poor game for you. I could tell you a tale."

"Naturally I shan't marry on empty promises. I shall do no business under half a million."

"You don't want much! Well, I wish you good luck; but listen — I have an idea. What about König? Is he good for a few thousand marks?"

"I have already thought of that, but it is doubtful if he will do it. First, we must pay him the old debt."

"But it won't hurt us to try. He can only refuse. I will at once write a few lines to him."

Leimann sat down at his desk and took a sheet of paper out of the drawer. Borgert in the meantime excused himself for a moment, because he had something to say to his man.

He wanted to make use of the time while Leimann was writing to wish the latter's wife good morning, so he stole quietly up the back stairs in his soft slippers. He found the door of the dressing-room open. He

Life in a Garrison Town

went in on tip-toe and saw Frau Leimann standing before the looking-glass. Her rich blonde hair hung in golden strands over her shoulders, falling below her hips. And as she raised her arms, the wide sleeves of her morning-gown slipped back to her elbow, revealing her lovely white arms. She made a beautiful picture, an inspiration for an artist.

Borgert stood still for a few minutes gazing with longing eyes at the beautiful woman, who did not seem to suspect that a prying stranger was watching her. Suddenly he threw open the door, hurried to Frau Leimann, kissed her on her neck, and stole quickly downstairs again. He strode noisily through the corridor, spoke a few words to his man, and then went unconcernedly into his room.

As Leimann was still writing, he took a chair, lit a cigarette and blew the smoke into a sunbeam which was playing in the room till the blue cloudlets wreathed in a fantastic circle.

Having finished his letter, Leimann put it in an envelope, wrote the address, and ordered the man to take it to its destination at once.

Life in a Garrison Town

“That ought to draw him,” said Leimann with satisfaction, as he got up from the writing-table.

“What have you written him?” asked Borgert inquiringly.

“Merely that I need money for a comrade, and that I appeal to the generosity of which he has so often given proof. I have settled to pay him back in three months, and have given my word for punctual payment, as you said you will be able to get the money by then.”

“Certainly I can if the fellow will only part. Till then we shall find a way.”

They chatted for about half-an-hour, when Röse returned with the answer from Captain König.

Leimann hastily seized the letter, but then hesitated to open it. He looked undecidedly at the address, and gazed questioningly across at Borgert, who was still sitting comfortably in his chair.

We often wait longingly for news, which may be of a pleasant or unpleasant nature; we can hardly brook the delay till we have the decision in our hands, but then do not dare to learn the result lest it should bring us disappointment. Uncertainty is better,

Life in a Garrison Town

for, besides the fear of disappointment, it also includes a hope of happiness. Finally Leimann tore open the envelope and unfolded the letter.

He looked startled at the writing. Borgert saw by his friend's face, who stood beside him with eyebrows raised and nervously twitching hands, that König's answer was unfavourable. But he was calmer, less taken aback, than Leimann, although the affair touched him more nearly. For a long time it had been nothing new to him to receive such refusals to his attempts to secure loans and the like. A man gets accustomed to anything.

His face, however, assumed an angry expression when he himself had read the answer which Leimann handed to him without a word. The letter read as follows:—

“To my great regret I am not in a position to grant your request. In the first place, because I cannot, and dare not on account of my family, let such large sums out of my hands unless absolute security be offered me. I am sorry to say I cannot see such assurance for punctual repayment in your word of honour, for you, as well as Lieutenant Borgert, have not been able to repay me the money I lent you some months ago, although you at that

Life in a Garrison Town

time gave me your word to settle your debt within ten days. In the second place, it seems to me that, from what I have lately heard about your affairs, I cannot see how you can possibly keep the promise you make to-day."

Borgert got up and threw the letter angrily on the floor, then he went to the window and looked out into the street.

Neither spoke a word. Only when their glances met, Leimann asked:

"What do you say to that?"

"Blackguardly insolence!" blustered Borgert. "What can people be thinking of to mix themselves in our private affairs? It was unfriendly enough to send us a refusal—but in this offensive tone! We can't put up with this!"

"What can we do?" answered Leimann, shrugging his shoulders. "If we take any steps against him he will answer that we gave him our word then, and that we cannot dispute. He has my promise in black and white. It is therefore better that we put up with his insolence and cut the fellow. He will soon notice it. He seems to have quite forgotten that it would be easy for us to ruin him. Did not he himself say at that time that he would lend us the amount out of

Life in a Garrison Town

the squadron's funds? I mean it would not be agreeable to him if this fact got about."

"That is true; but you can't mix yourself up in this, because his onslaught on the cash-box was made in our interest."

"It is all the same to me. If he thinks that he can show us such insolence I for one will pay him back in the same coin."

"But you cannot give it out that König lent you money after he had taken it from the cash-box. That would throw a curious light on your behaviour."

"I shouldn't commence so awkwardly. One can set about the matter in a round-about way, and I will so arrange it that no one shall know who began the report. But I will pay the brute out."

Both were again silent, and a few minutes later Leimann said good-bye because he had an errand in town before dinner. Borgert also did not remain longer in his rooms. He went to the casino and forgot his ill-temper in a bottle of champagne.

As Borgert awoke a few mornings later he noticed to his great consternation that he had overslept himself, thus again missing

Life in a Garrison Town

parade. He rang violently for his man, but even after a second pull at the bell Röse did not appear.

Borgert dressed himself and went into Röse's room. He found it empty. The bed was untouched, and on it lay the fellow's uniform and cap.

Astonished, he looked round the little room, which was filled with a fœtid atmosphere, a smell of dirty linen and worn-out clothing. Where could Röse have gone without saying a word? Was he on duty? No, that could not be, for there was his uniform.

Borgert was already standing on the threshold and about to leave the room, when he caught sight of a piece of paper lying on the dirty table.

He took it up, and his face grew pale as he read it, for it contained in clumsy writing the following words: "I beg to take my leave of you." Borgert stared at the paper as if turned to stone. The fellow had deserted.

Borgert could not deceive himself for a moment as to the reason for this, and he suddenly felt uneasy, as the idea flashed through his mind that perhaps Röse would

Life in a Garrison Town

be caught. Then everything would come out—his bad treatment, his blows, and all else that Röse had either himself seen or learnt about his master.

As if stunned, he went into his room and sat on the side of the bed.

He thought he was dreaming. All sorts of ideas ran wildly through his head, and his pale lips twitched nervously.

Were all in conspiracy against him? Trouble, adversity, disappointment on all sides. No ray of light in the future, which rose black and threatening before him.

For the first time the thought came on him with terrible certainty that a catastrophe was imminent, and that, unless a miracle should happen, nothing could save him. But how could a miracle happen. All faith and hope faded into thin air in the few moments as he recognised the crushing burden of his debts and sins. A fear, a horror of himself, and a feeling of helplessness overcame the man whom otherwise nothing could move—the man who, with cold calculation, and remorselessly, was accustomed to struggle against all difficulties and awkward situations in life. Incapable of deep emotion or noble feeling, till now he had

Life in a Garrison Town

gone the way of egotism, with a brutality which his superficial view of life had given him.

For a long time he sat there, pale and still, his eyes fixed on vacancy; only the nervous twitching of his face betrayed that there was yet life in the motionless figure. The inward struggle and contention of a man who only learns too late how he has violently ruined and trodden under foot his own life, who hopes for an unmerited intervention of fate, and in whom the frightened soul struggles on, hoping against hope, as a drowning man struggles with the waves till his last breath, even when he sees no helping hand from far or near, racked his soul.

Borgert now saw himself clearly; he had summed up his position and recognised his life had been spoiled by his own doing. He determined to bear the consequences now that he could no longer escape them.

Mechanically he dressed himself and went to the barracks to tell the Captain he had missed parade.

For the present he intended saying nothing of Röse's flight, for if the deserter were at once pursued it was almost certain that in a

Life in a Garrison Town

few days he would be arrested. If, however, he had forty-eight hours' start he would have sufficient time to reach a secure hiding-place, and then Borgert would be spared the ordeal of being called before a court-martial and sentenced for ill-treating a subordinate.

As he again entered his home about mid-day, he found a letter awaiting him. It was the answer from the money-lender in Berlin, telling him in a few words that a loan could not be granted because inquiries about Borgert and his surety, Leimann, had revealed the fact that they were both in an extremely impecunious position.

Borgert bore the news nonchalantly, for since the morning he had given up every hope of a favourable issue, and so had expected nothing different.

Looking at the matter dispassionately, it was obvious that no man would lend money on the security of an honest face and fine words, so it would be no good to take any more trouble in the matter. If in spite of this there had been people who had placed money at his disposal, it was only on Leimann's surety, who understood how to place his affairs in such a favourable

Life in a Garrison Town

light that he was simply believed without any special inquiries being made about him.

Worn out and distracted, he threw himself down on the sofa.

He did not want to go to the mess, for he had no appetite, and did not feel in a mood to chatter and joke with his comrades. He did not wish to see any one, he only wanted to be alone — quite alone.

He gazed round the magnificent room, and as he saw the beautiful pictures on the walls, the costly oak furniture and valuable carpets, it pained him that all this splendour and beauty would become prey to his creditors. When the crisis came they would all fight and struggle to get possession. But that did not help him. In a few days the crash would come. There was no possibility of salvation.

Still, what would then become of him? He had not yet begun to think about it. Was he to see himself stripped of everything and an outcast on the streets? Waiting in this way he would be put in prison. Time was short; he had to come to a decision quickly, he must do so at once. He could not see what he still had to hope for in this miserable and unhappy life. For to leave,

Life in a Garrison Town

scorned and despised by all, to learn a new profession and be obliged to work, was not to his taste. Luxurious and exacting as he was, to force himself to lead a simple life, perhaps hold a modest or inferior position, would be next door to impossible for him. For that required energy, self-denial, and love of work, all of which he lacked. Should he simply blow his brains out?

No — that was bad form and required courage, which he had only possessed when there was nothing to risk.

And finally, who could know if he would not some time meet with good luck? Then suicide would be a premature folly. Life could be so beautiful, and to cut it short — No — a thousand times, no!

For a long time he ransacked his mind, but could find no practical solution for his difficulties. He thought of his servant. How slyly had he set to work to free himself from a position which did not suit him! Perhaps he was now settled down, at ease and undisturbed, in a quiet corner where nobody would think of asking questions about him, where he could live and be merry.

If he himself could only do that?

Life in a Garrison Town

The more the thought of secret flight took form in Borgert's mind, the more feasible the plan seemed to him. Among fresh people in another land he could begin life again. How long would it be before he was forgotten! Perhaps in a year his name would no longer be mentioned, or, at any rate, only as that of a dead man. As for the rest, nobody would trouble about him.

He was so sunk in his thoughts that he did not notice when the door opened and Frau Leimann entered.

She looked pale and anxious, her usually young and beautiful face had aged, and her eyes had a frightened expression.

Borgert did not rise, but without a word he simply nodded. At the same time his glance fell on the woman's figure.

To-day she did not seem worth having, she looked quite unlike herself. Her movements seemed limp and without grace, the charms which had so often intoxicated him he saw no longer. Her hair was tangled and hurriedly arranged; the folds of her disorderly morning-gown, carelessly flung on, did not suggest the full form, the roundness of limbs and the health of a young

Life in a Garrison Town

woman. But she appeared to him old and worn.

Was it merely passion that had made this woman appear so beautiful, so desirable to him? And to-day was it mental and nervous exhaustion which had killed that desire so that she no longer had charms for him? He did not realise that he was influenced by two contrary impressions — the woman as she now stood before him and the glorious creature whose flowing hair and naked arms and shoulders he had seen and kissed a few days before.

She sat down on the sofa close to him and took his hand in hers. Her eyes looked anxiously into the face of the man who lay so apathetic and indifferent before her.

“Are you ill, George?” she asked him, troubled.

He shook his head without a word.

“But do tell me what is the matter with you — tell me!”

“Nothing and everything.”

“What do you mean, George? Do speak sensibly.”

“What shall I speak about, my dear? I’ve done with it all. There is nothing else the matter!”

Life in a Garrison Town

“Done with what? What do you mean me to understand by that?”

“With everything — with life and with myself!”

“You are speaking in riddles, George. Tell me openly and plainly what has happened.”

“I’m dead broke. I must get away or there will be trouble.”

Borgert felt her whole body quiver. She answered nothing, but, turning her face slowly away, looked through the window.

In his heart Borgert was thankful that she took the news so quietly instead of, after the manner of women, screaming and falling into hysterics. And as he watched her pale profile against the window and saw the tears standing in her eyes, he was overcome with pity for her and drew her into his arms.

And as he held her in a silent embrace she whispered to him :

“Take me with you, George.”

Startled, Borgert replied :

“For Heaven’s sake, what puts such thoughts in your head? How dare I do it?”

“Dear George, take me with you. I can’t stand it any longer here.”

“But that is out of the question, my

Life in a Garrison Town

darling. There will be scandal enough if I disappear alone. And if I should take you with me? Impossible!"

"Then I will go alone. I must go away — I must."

"Why so suddenly? What has happened?"

Frau Leimann broke into passionate sobbing.

"My husband has struck me because the bailiff came again. I can't stand such treatment any longer — for — I have no money to pay my debts, and something dreadful will happen."

Borgert had some trouble to quiet the excited woman.

He thought the matter over. The idea was not a bad one. If she wanted to go away she might just as well go with him, then he would have at least somebody with him to whom he could sometimes speak, and, still further, one who was in the same boat as himself.

And as Frau Leimann looked at him entreatingly, he took her again in his arms and whispered:

"Yes, come with me. We will go to-morrow evening."

Life in a Garrison Town

Long he held her in his arms, then he tore himself from her caresses and led her to a chair.

He sat down opposite her and said :

“Now we must speak sensibly about our plans. First, how shall you get away without your husband’s knowledge?”

“Max is going to Berlin to-morrow. He is obliged to go there on duty. Hasn’t he told you?”

“No. But that settles the matter splendidly. Now, further, have you money for the journey?”

“Yes; my mother has sent three hundred marks, and I haven’t spent any, because I had quite made up my mind to go away.”

“Well, you are better off than I am. I have only one mark. But I’ll manage somehow or other. Thirdly, how will you get your luggage to the station without anyone seeing it? You can’t go away with only the dress you have on.”

“Quite easily, George. Ask my husband to-day to lend you his big trunk, and tell him you are obliged to go home; then I will pack everything in it, and the man will carry it downstairs to you. It is big enough for us both.”

Life in a Garrison Town

“I always said so,” replied Borgert, laughing. “There is an old proverb —

A woman’s tongue, in plottings great,
The wiliest tricks to you will prate.’

Your stratagem is first-rate, and I accept it.”

“And by what train shall we travel?”

“You go in the afternoon, so that we don’t leave together, which would naturally be remarked. I’ll follow by the evening train. It will be best to meet in the waiting-room at Frankfort, then we can talk over what we are going to do in the future quietly. Of course I shall take three days’ leave of absence, so that I shall not be followed at once.”

“So far we agree. I will come down in the morning as soon as my husband has gone away, and then we can discuss the matter again. Now I must go upstairs.”

Still one more loving kiss and Frau Leimann turned towards the door. As she nodded to Borgert from across the threshold she pleased him again.

With her flaming cheeks, rough hair and bright eyes, she was charming! A kind of delight came over him at the thought that this lovely woman would belong to him, that

Life in a Garrison Town

she would always be with him, and it would help him to bear all the disagreeables that were in store for him.

All at once Borgert had regained his good humour, and quite recovered his spirits. For now his flight would have quite another construction — people would say they had fled as lovers. There would be enough scandal and gossip, but the whole affair seemed to him more dignified, interesting and excusable, than if it were said he had bolted because he could not face his debts and to save himself from the consequences of underhand dealings.

For a moment a voice of conscience mingled with his joy, warning him not to commit a fresh crime. But the voice was so weak and feeble that Borgert scarcely heard it. The principal thing was that it offered him something agreeable, an advantage which he should not let slip simply in consideration for others; they only came in after himself.

The more strongly egoism rules in man the more easily he overcomes all emotions, all sentimental thoughts which warn him against sin. If we hope to gain an advantage from such sin, then do we wander from the right

Life in a Garrison Town

path. For that reason the greatest criminals are also the greatest egoists. So Borgert turned cheerfully towards the town, went to the post-office, where he sent a telegram to a second-hand furniture dealer in the neighbouring town requesting him to call the next morning.

Then he returned home and went upstairs to Leimann's. He found his friend packing his box.

"So to-morrow you are going away? I only heard it at midday!" said Borgert, holding out his hand.

"I am not so very pleased about it, for I am in no way prepared for such a journey. But that is always the way. One only receives orders at the last moment, so that one has just time to catch the train."

"In spite of that, I envy you the pleasant journey. I have a less agreeable one before me."

"Are you also going away?"

"I don't want to, but I must!"

"Where are you going?"

"Home. I am going away to-morrow afternoon."

"Ah, I understand! A pleasant journey and good luck!"

Life in a Garrison Town

“Thank you! Oh, by the way, can you lend me a trunk? I should like to take some things home with me, and mine is too small to hold them.”

“Of course. My man shall carry my big box downstairs; will that do?”

“Certainly — quite large enough; many thanks!”

Borgert noticed that his visit was not very welcome. Leimann was in a bad temper, and would not let himself be disturbed in his occupation in the least. He was so wrapped up in thought that he scarcely heard Borgert's questions, who thought well to say good-bye, promising to come up again to supper.

“But when can I have the box?” he asked as he was leaving.

“As soon as my man returns from the town; so good-bye!”

Borgert, when he reached his room, sank down on an arm-chair. He felt so well and free that he could have shouted for joy, for in a day he would be rid of the whole lot, and there would be no need for him to worry. And, moreover, to have such a pleasant companion! He wondered that the idea had not entered his head before.

Life in a Garrison Town

Then it flashed across him that he had not yet begun to think of packing; he would at least put everything in order that nothing might be forgotten.

As he looked round the beautiful room he considered what he should take away with him. Then, getting up, he took down a silver cup from the wall, the farewell present from his former regiment, and put it on the table in the next room.

An album, several photographs, a packet of letters, two riding-whips and two small oil-paintings, the work of his dead sister — that was all he thought of taking with him. All the rest could remain to solace his creditors.

At seven o'clock he again went to the Leimanns', and found them already at table. Leimann's face grew gloomy as Borgert came in, and he hardly looked up from his plate.

His wife sat with flaming cheeks opposite him. She did not touch her food, but looked anxiously across to her husband.

The whole evening the cloud hung over them all, and not even a bottle of Eckel could rouse their usual hilarity. Leimann was in a bad humour, and nothing could be

Life in a Garrison Town

done with him. For that reason they separated sooner than usual, and their parting was cooler than was customary. But still Frau Leimann had the opportunity of giving her lover a hasty kiss in the corridor as her husband went into the room to fetch a match.

The next morning Borgert had scarcely dressed when the furniture dealer came. The Lieutenant greeted him pleasantly and begged him to enter, then he completed his toilet and began to bargain with the Jew.

“Will you just look at my furniture?” said he. “I am thinking of selling everything just as it is, for I have been transferred, but kindly be discreet about the matter for the present. How much would you give for it?”

The Jew looked thoughtfully round the room. He felt and tested each piece, examined the coverlets and carpets, and summed up the costly carving of the bookcase. Then he took a notebook out of his pocket, squinted at each single thing, and then noted down the price. Finally he turned to Borgert, and, with a questioning look, said:

Life in a Garrison Town

“Fifteen hundred marks, sir — money down.”

“What! — fifteen hundred marks?” exclaimed Borgert, very disappointed. “I paid almost ten thousand marks for the things!”

“I am sorry, sir,” said the Jew, shrugging his shoulders; “old things are not new ones; nobody would pay more.”

“That is too little — it is almost giving it away.”

“Very well, I will give you two thousand marks, but not a penny more.”

Borgert sat down in his writing-chair. He was considering, and, while doing so, the Jew peered at him expectantly.

“All right, give me the money,” said Borgert, after thinking the matter over; “you can have the stuff.”

Though it seemed to him that two thousand marks was a beggarly sum for such costly furniture, yet it was better than nothing, so he quickly determined to take the paltry price rather than be obliged to give up his idea of flight for want of money.

The Jew, with a smirk of satisfaction, drew a paper out of his pocket-book and, writing down a few words, gave it Borgert to sign.

Life in a Garrison Town

When the Jew had gone away and Borgert held the two thousand mark notes in his hand, it seemed to him that the last hindrance to his flight was overcome, for ready money was the chief thing. He folded the notes together, and putting them in his purse went into his bedroom and took a travelling suit out of his wardrobe. The rest of his mufti he packed in the box with Frau Leimann's dresses, then on the top of these the few things he intended taking with him, and had the box taken at once to the railway-station.

The Colonel showed little desire to grant Borgert leave of absence, and only after he had again represented to him the urgency of the journey did the former allow himself to be persuaded and give the three days' leave. Finally he hoped that the Lieutenant would be able to arrange matters with his father and so get the disagreeable money affairs settled. That would be very pleasant for him — and so he let him go.

In the meantime Leimann was well on his journey. The two friends had not even said good-bye. His wife was still very busy. There was much to do; here a packet of letters to burn which neither her husband

Life in a Garrison Town

nor George could be allowed to read, there a few little souvenirs to pack, mostly worthless, useless things whose value lay in their remembrances.

The heart of a woman clings to such things as bring back to her mind happy moments, and she would sooner give away the most beautiful ring she had *bought* than the dried flower or the little amulet from the hand of a man who had once played an important part in her life.

Two days ago she had thought the secret good-bye to Bubi, her little two-year-old son, would cause her sorrow, and now she felt a prick of conscience because she could take leave of him with a light heart, without shedding a tear, and so leave her only child motherless, to face an uncertain, perhaps unhappy, future.

It was inexplicable, but from the first moment she had felt something like aversion for the child with its broad nose, big mouth, and little piercing eyes. After a few weeks it bore a decided likeness to its father, and the more the estrangement grew between her husband and herself, the more the mother's love in her seemed to shrink. She looked upon the ugly little creature that was

Life in a Garrison Town

always screaming, as his child only, and upon herself as the natural means of bringing it into the world ; and so it happened that the poor little baby was almost always in the kitchen, and passed its life, fed, reared and brought up by the servants. The mother hardly saw her child one hour in the day. There are women who, vain and conscious only of their own beauty, look upon it as an insult of nature and a punishment from Heaven when they bear ugly children ; children for whom they feel an inward distaste, and avoid as they would try to forget an outrage committed against their womanly pride.

She felt justified in leaving her husband, for he deserved no better treatment, and so she was hardly conscious of guilt when at three o'clock she got into a first-class carriage on the Frankfort express. What man does not try to justify his sins and errors to himself ? Superficial, self-seeking men even have reached the point of seeing in the greatest crimes committed by themselves merely a trifling fault which their fellow-men judge too harshly because they have not understood their motives.

Borgert was such a man ; for the egoist,

Life in a Garrison Town

the end justifies the means. In good spirits and quite satisfied, he parted from the garrison, his friends and his duties, with a scornful smile at those who, owing to narrowness of mind, cling to customs and traditions, and have not the pluck to tread under foot the interests of others should it be to their own advantage.

As, late in the evening, the two sat together in the dining-room of an expensive hotel, it seemed to them that their future would be a dream of sunshine without shadows, and so they celebrated the first day of their new free life in a bottle of champagne.

CHAPTER VI

THE flight of Lieutenant Borgert did not long remain a secret.

When after the expiration of his three days' leave he did not return, a telegram sent to his father elicited the fact that he had not been home. The supposition was obvious that he had deserted in order to escape the consequences of his fast life.

It is true that, with the exception of Leimann, nobody really knew in what a terrible state his affairs were. Only when the Jew came to take away the things he had bought, and the sheriff's officers armed with a new writ for a large sum put in a prior claim, did the catastrophe take place which exposed at one stroke the system on which Borgert had worked.

All Borgert's property was seized in the name of the law, and a day fixed on which to consider how the claims of the various creditors should be dealt with.

Life in a Garrison Town

Although the valuable furniture represented a fairly large asset, it was only a drop in the ocean, for when by order of Court a notice was inserted in the papers asking all those who could prove their claims to send them in, a mountain of bills poured in, the sum total being over 20,000 marks.

At the same time the Court impounded the whole of Borgert's possible private fortune, and a warrant was issued for the arrest of the guilty man on a charge of fraud.

The Court had his apartments sealed, and even his poor horse bore a small seal on his mane, which was artistically plaited with thread.

The particulars of the latest event spread through the little town and the neighbourhood like wildfire, and there were also short notices in the newspapers.

The Colonel was quite dejected. The knowing gentlemen of the regiment of course had seen the crash coming for a long time, as, whatever happens, there are always people who foresee the inevitable, but only when it has happened do they with a superior smile maintain they had expected nothing else for years.

Life in a Garrison Town

But the Colonel in great grief expressed his opinion to Captain König that "this was the last straw that would break the camel's back," and from that time he performed his duties with a very distressed air. For by degrees he saw clearly that an efficient management of his officers should be carried out in another manner, and that his policy had been a mistaken one.

Only after some days was it known that Frau Leimann had followed Borgert, when her husband on his return from Berlin received a letter from her begging for forgiveness and protesting she could not have acted otherwise.

So Leimann was doubly punished—first of all ridiculed and scoffed at before the whole world for having a runaway wife, and then obliged to sell the greater part of his property as quickly as possible in order to answer the demands of those for whom he had been Borgert's surety. Nothing but the bare necessities of life remained.

At first it was believed that Frau Leimann's letter would put them on the track of the fugitives; later not even the numerous descriptions of the detectives or police agents were successful in tracing them.

Life in a Garrison Town

Whether they were in Germany or in a foreign country, nobody knew.

About two weeks after the flight Röse was caught. He had been found on the Belgian frontier owing to the description in the warrant.

The trial resulted in the eliciting of the fact that Borgert had repeatedly ill-treated him, and this had driven him to desert. But this only slightly mitigated his punishment, and everybody was sorry for the poor soldier whose misfortune had been caused by the iniquities and bad treatment of his superior.

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In the divorce suit which Leimann brought against his wife, many ugly facts came to light.

Both the maid-servants, as also the manservant, told stories which made the few hairs on Leimann's head stand on end, and he could not understand how he had been so blind as not to see the intrigue going on in his own home.

The decree of divorce was granted and Leimann sent in his papers because, on the one hand, he was forced to seek a more lucrative profession, and on the other be-

Life in a Garrison Town

cause the whole affair had so damaged his reputation that it was impossible for him to think of remaining longer in the army. So he accepted a situation as traveller for a wine merchant, a post which provided him with the necessary means of livelihood. He gave up his broken home and sent his child to be brought up in a friend's family, his small pension as lieutenant being guaranteed as payment.

Almost at the same time as his resignation was accepted, the sentence on Borgert was announced. It was, in all, five years' imprisonment, ten years' loss of civil rights and drumming out of the army, the cause being fraud, desertion, and ill-treatment of his subordinates in ten proved cases.

The newspapers published the sentence, and so his ingenious career came to a close, in his Fatherland at any rate.

In the meantime the ex-Sergeant Schmitz sat at one of the numerous desks in the office of a large factory.

The other employees had already left their places, and were just about to take their coats from the pegs, for ten minutes ago the bell that announced work was over

Life in a Garrison Town

for the day had rung. But Schmitz had already become accustomed to the conversation going on around and he wrote industriously, quite lost in columns of figures which were written on the paper before him.

The room was now empty, and Schmitz was about to begin a new sheet when the foreman, Mauer, entered.

He was a man of square build, with sharp, searching eyes, and long pale face. The moustache hung round the corners of his mouth, and the whole expression of his face was somewhat cruel and brutal, and especially now, as he stood in the dim light looking in at the door, he appeared like a wild beast.

“Again you’re not done. Coming soon?” said he to Schmitz, who, without looking up from his work, answered shortly :

“In a moment; sit down and wait.”

The two men were good friends.

A few weeks ago Schmitz was among the hands at the lathe, mechanically pushing one piece of wood after another under the sharp teeth of the circular saw. And he could have passed his life doing the monotonous work which gave him little time to think. For here it was necessary to be wide-awake

Life in a Garrison Town

if one did not want to bemoan the loss of a finger or perhaps a whole hand.

But it was soon discovered that the reserve and determination of this quiet, industrious man fitted him for a wider sphere of action, so after a short time Schmitz was made foreman of the machine shop in which he had till then worked.

The other workmen, it is true, looked with envious eyes upon the upstart who had only just appeared upon the scene, and had already been put over them. There was no lack of covert sneers, but the old soldier with perfect calm soon put those in their place who overstepped the mark.

When all were industriously at work in the morning he often went across to Mauer, who was employed in the machine-shop.

And during these morning talks Mauer, who was a dreaded Social-Democrat, soon discovered in Schmitz, a man who was easy to win, a promising and energetic recruit if he were only properly handled.

This effort on the part of Mauer was the more successful, because Schmitz had not yet overcome his resentment against militarism and the government which was responsible for it. A deep inward rage still stirred

him at the injustice which had robbed him of the best years of his life.

So he had soon pledged himself to the red flag, body and soul, and out of the faithful soldier had sprung a strenuous upholder of the Socialists.

The next day Schmitz was to make a speech before a large circle of men of like opinions, and this was why Mauer waited for him, for he wanted to talk over the most important points with his friend.

When Schmitz had finished his work and locked up in his desk the sheet upon which the list of work for the previous week had been noted, he went out with Mauer, and the two wandered silently towards the narrow street where the latter lived.

They took home a can of beer with them from a neighbouring public-house, lit the lamp, and began to discuss matters.

It was a question of a new tariff Bill which would fall as a crushing burden on the working class, and therefore it was necessary to gain over as much opposition as possible, so that at the last reading of the Bill in the *Reichstag* an enormous majority should prevent the carrying out of the proposition.

Life in a Garrison Town

The two friends remained in earnest conversation till after midnight, and when they separated they were united by a stronger tie than before.

The next day found Schmitz in a state of feverish unrest. It seemed to him that a strange change had taken place in him since he had ceased to wear the King's uniform. A year ago he was still a soldier of the Emperor, a man who had sworn to protect his Fatherland and help its advance; and now? one of those who were accused of upheaving the State from its foundations and creating a new form of government in accordance with their own laws.

And yet the same evening he proudly mounted the speaker's platform and hundreds greeted their new and able comrade. Before he had even spoken a word there awoke in him a strange new sensation, a vague tremendous desire to achieve some great act. He wanted to appeal to and carry with him the assembled multitude, to force them into the magic circle of his thoughts, that all should follow him passively as the sheep their shepherd. He began his speech in a firm voice. With broad strokes he

Life in a Garrison Town

described first the character of the new law proposed and then the consequences to the working classes.

A new tax always meant another step towards making the poor poorer. And these fresh expenses would be unnecessary if there were not a continual increase of the army and changes in the equipments.

“The State spends enormous sums every year on the army,” said he. “Scarcely have millions been spent for the introduction of new guns, or the forming of a new regiment, when these changes soon prove to be behind the times, and new sums of an incredible amount are demanded to make good errors or premature haste. Germany’s fame and place among the Powers has been won by her army, and it is her army which her neighbours envy. Are we not already at the zenith of our military power? Must we so increase our army till it finally crushes every other organ of the State?”

“Were only a part of the colossal sums, which the army swallows up every year, used for other departments of the Empire, it would not be necessary to tax the citizens so out of proportion to their incomes. Then we should become a rich country, the citizens

Life in a Garrison Town

would be well off; industry, re-born with a new vigour, would advance by leaps and bounds.

“Should this undue favouritism shown to the army not decrease,” continued Schmitz, “then the necessary sums required to keep it up should be taken from either the leisured classes or from those who, doing unimportant work, save millions. But, as it is, the rich are not more heavily burdened than the working man, who gives up his hard-won bread to help to provide a capital in the fruits of which he never participates.

“For what blessing does the army bring to the citizens or to the people? They bring up sons only to surrender them in the best years of youth, when the boy develops into the man and his character ripens, only too often to be treated with injustice and brutality, and to be returned to ordinary life as bitter opponents of the Government or as cripples. Though a man may have sacrificed to the State the best years of his working life and health, he may be discharged for a trifle and, like a cast-off dog, must seek a new master to gain his bread in the struggle for existence.

“For this reason let us try to force the

Life in a Garrison Town

Government to employ the money which they spend so uselessly, for some better aim, so that the people may be rewarded for the sacrifices they make!"

The words of the speaker, thinking as he did of his own bitter experiences, were greeted with frequent applause, and as Schmitz left the platform the enthusiastic crowd tumultuously greeted the man who had found the right means to lessen their burdens.

So convincing had his words sounded that many who had not yet decided which party they should join, unconditionally followed the man whose words had moved them so deeply that evening, and so Schmitz in an instant became one of the ablest adherents of the Red Party, whose power in the great manufacturing town was continually on the increase.

CHAPTER VII

SERGEANT-MAJOR KROHN, the clerk of the regiment, stood leaning against the iron grating of the staff office.

He was comfortably smoking a morning cigar and reading the *Deutsche Zeitung*, which the postman had just delivered for the Colonel. There was no especial haste about work, for the Colonel had ridden out to the manœuvres, and on such days the adjutant always made up for lost hours of sleep.

Krohn was just deep in reading the advertisements when Sergeant-Major Schöne-
mann entered, a cigarette between his lips and his sword dangling at his heels.

“Morning, Herr Commandeur,” said Krohn jokingly. “What’s the news? Are the smiths at work yet?”

“No,” answered Schöne-
mann; “the smiths are still on the way and no lead has come by post. But have you heard the latest? I’d almost forgotten.”

Life in a Garrison Town

“No; have they decorated me?”

“Not exactly that, but König is under arrest.”

“What? König? *Donnerwetter!* What’s he been up to?”

“Oh, they say he’s dipped his fist in the squadron cash-box. Such a rich fellow needn’t have done that.”

“The devil he has! But I shouldn’t have thought it, especially of him. How did it come out?”

“I haven’t an idea. It must have got to the Colonel. He sent for him yesterday and told him the whole story. I was looking through the keyhole and saw the poor fellow turn pale. He at once wanted to fetch the account books. But the Colonel wouldn’t let him go and had him put under arrest.”

“But they were always such good friends.”

“Of course! There must be something in the story or the Colonel wouldn’t have acted so, especially as he’s in a tight box himself. This scandal will finish him.”

“I won’t believe it till I see it in black and white. König wouldn’t do such a thing. The Colonel’s always after some-

Life in a Garrison Town

thing or other and is glad if he can go for a man. He considers that smart."

"Well, we shall see."

Lieutenant Borgert had considered it his last duty to pay out Captain König for the letter which he had written refusing the loan for which Borgert had asked. The transaction which he knew of seemed to him a fitting tool for revenge, and so he had taken care by occasional remarks among his comrades to spread the report more and more. At last the gossip and talk had reached such a pitch that there was nothing left but to investigate the matter.

But König had found no chance to clear himself of the terrible suspicion, for not a word was uttered before him. Borgert had succeeded in rousing a general feeling of dislike against the man who had been so popular. And as the latter answered this only with quiet reserve, no sympathy was shown for him, but, on the contrary, everybody was secretly glad that there was another scapegoat.

Lieutenant Bleibtreu would perhaps have told his superior officer in good time of the gossip, but he happened to be away on leave

Life in a Garrison Town

and did not correspond with his contemporaries, and only learnt of the story from König himself.

König had been let out on a substantial bail, and so, although suspended from his duties, he could await the result in his own home. At first he was almost beside himself. After fifteen years' reproachless service to be accused of a mean and paltry crime on the word of a morally degraded man, the laughing-stock of everybody, and, to boot, a man who owed him gratitude!

Where was the trust, the good comradeship, which had always been shown him? Was it not the duty of his superiors to investigate facts, which in his circumstances were most unlikely, before he was actually accused, a course likely to ruin his reputation both in the regiment and in the town?

His arrest had caused all kinds of extravagant reports and scandals, so much so that he was now looked upon as a criminal, an outcast, and he and his family were already objects of scorn.

Only Bleibtreu was convinced of his friend's innocence, he knew him too well to be able to believe for a moment that he was guilty. He showed this by daily visiting

Life in a Garrison Town

König in his home without concealment and spending the evening in the family circle.

He joined him in his lonely walks, even persevering in this after having been warned against König by his comrades, who showed their resentment by taking up a distinctly hostile position with regard to him.

However, all this enmity did not succeed in weakening him ; he would have considered it cowardly and base to desert a friend in misfortune, who had been good to him in better days.

Gradually the whole regiment, especially the privates, became indignant at the manner in which a favourite officer was plunged into misfortune, and this feeling was expressed by frequent visits of his subordinates to the Captain. Even the civilians, who had entirely withdrawn from the society of the Colonel, and that of the gentlemen of the regiment, were filled with disgust and repugnance at this disgraceful state of affairs and manifested their sympathy for König in an unmistakable way.

Owing to these circumstances König gradually looked more hopefully at the future. He comforted himself with the

Life in a Garrison Town

thought that justice would prevail and the day must come when he would reckon up with those who had dared to assail his honour. But he had to undergo a severe trial of patience.

Had the case been such as to excite public comment, and had the issue roused the feeling and curiosity of the multitude — murder, ill-treatment, or some such momentous crime — there would have been a great haste to appease public opinion by quickly arriving at a verdict.

But here there seemed to be no haste — the accused had to wait patiently till time could be found for his case. What did it matter how long he remained in uncertainty, thus giving rich food for gossip among the evil-disposed?

So only after six weeks did the first hearing take place in which König was given an opportunity to explain the whole affair and to prove his innocence.

But he was mistaken if he had hoped that this would end the trial. For now the books for the last three years were ordered to be examined, and for this purpose the Court required three whole months.

On the principal count of the indictment

Life in a Garrison Town

he was found "not guilty." It was proved that the regiment's cash had not been misappropriated, but that he had pretended to do so in order to prove the difficulties of getting money, and so to put an end to further attempts at borrowing.

König himself had thought any other verdict impossible. But among the circle of his comrades it was received with rage and disappointment, and on the other hand with satisfaction and pleasure by all those who liked König and his family, and who had doubted the truth of the charge from the very outset.

When four months later the verdict was confirmed, he was arraigned anew before the Court of Honour which was to re-open the whole affair and to submit the case again to examination to see if in any point König had violated the rules of conduct befitting an officer, and, if so, he would be liable to punishment from that tribunal.

As now an unfavourable result was no longer to be feared, König, after consideration, was convinced that even if he were punished at all, only the minimum penalty could be inflicted, which would leave no evil effects.

Life in a Garrison Town

This time the Captain looked upon as an hour of trial ordained by fate — a time of uncertainty and doubt, but he felt quite cheerful in his enforced retirement after he was once accustomed to it.

When with his family, König overcame the depression which often seized him, and he spent the day in his favourite occupation of playing the piano or in other like amusements.

Frau Clara had survived the trying period with admirable energy and courage: once the most popular lady of the regiment, honoured and esteemed by all, and now the wife of the man at whom all fingers were pointed as if he were a rogue — a disaster which might well have humbled a proud woman's soul to the dust.

Yet it was she who brought sunshine into the depressed atmosphere, who often dispelled the clouds of sorrow and despair with a simulated gaiety.

Even Bleibtreu in the company of this charming woman regained his good-humour whenever he lost courage in this maze of back-biting and infamy.

One day when particularly depressed he came to see König. He took his place

Life in a Garrison Town

silently at the supper table, and even Frau König's lively chatter was not able to dispel the cloud which hung over him.

Only when the little son of the house was put to bed, and they were sitting round the table in König's den, did the Captain slap him on the shoulder and say with a laugh :

“ Why do you pull such a long face ? Has something gone wrong at home ? ”

A mournful smile appeared on Bleibtreu's lips, but he answered nothing.

“ But do tell me, man, what is the matter with you,” the Captain repeated.

“ My request to be transferred has been refused to-day,” replied the young officer in a depressed voice.

König did not answer, his wife also remained silent and only looked with sympathy at her friend.

“ And what do you think of doing now ? ” asked the Captain after a short pause.

“ I have sent in my resignation to-day.”

For a moment husband and wife looked startled at the speaker, but then König stretched out his hand to his friend, saying :

“ You have done the right thing ! It is true I pity you from the bottom of my heart. You must now choose a new profes-

Life in a Garrison Town

sion, but you are young and you have still many years before you. I understand the motives which have influenced you to this step. As a young officer you have experienced what in my old days touches me no less, and I can understand that you have lost all respect for the profession which has been yours till now. I could have wished you to have learnt your lesson in another garrison under different conditions and among different people. There are still officers with whom one can live and enjoy life. As this has been denied to you, it is best for you to turn your back on a soldier's career. I should have given you this advice sooner had I not been afraid of urging you to a step which perhaps later you would have repented. To show that I speak from conviction, I will tell you that I also think of resigning."

This time it was Bleibtreu who stared at the Captain with wide-open eyes.

"But why?" he asked, astonished. "For you at least will be transferred."

"Certainly I shall be transferred, but with me it is as with you. I have lost all respect for the profession I have filled with honour for fifteen years. It is true that my first experiences were much better, but that such

Life in a Garrison Town

things can happen as have happened among our own officers has shown me that I am out of place here. Who can promise that similar things will not happen to me in another garrison? Besides, I can distinctly foresee that I shall not be transferred to an important centre."

"And why not?" asked Bleibtreu.

"*Semper aliquid haeret*, my friend — some mud always sticks; besides, I am still to be punished by the Court of Honour, which means an inferior garrison."

"That is possible," assented Bleibtreu.

"Do you know I've lived in this miserable hole for nine years! I have become a regular peasant. It's the truth, though you may laugh. If one never associates with other people—the few days' leave are of no account—one hardly knows how to behave, and becomes accustomed to bad form and careless habits which would disgust our friends in Berlin or Hanover. The casino, which we have gradually found natural and normal enough here, would be quite impossible in another garrison, because people there have more intercourse with each other, and see new faces every day, and so are obliged to be careful of their manners. But

Life in a Garrison Town

let these people live together the whole year, alone, isolated, then manners will grow more careless, and by degrees one becomes a kind of drawing-room cad."

"That is quite natural, Captain. Here we live together as in a dovecot, and of course no one has anything better to do than to pry into his neighbour's affairs, and to meddle with everything he does simply because he has no other occupation, for the sufficient reason that there is nothing for him to do in such a small garrison; and besides, this is the cause of these eternal scandals, for to these out-of-the-way holes are sent those undesirable elements which cannot be employed in more respectable garrisons, and for which there is no other riddance. Every day one hears: penalty, transference to Mörchengen, Lyck, or whatever the name of the hateful places are."

"Quite right," König answered warmly. "Whoever has done wrong somewhere else is generally sent to a frontier garrison in order to render him harmless. They never consider that these objectionable units so collected together may be the cause of more evil than if they lived among at least a like number of worthy and irreproachable com-

Life in a Garrison Town

rades. Nearly all the scandalous stories told of officers happen on the frontiers in such forsaken holes as are only known because they are marked on the large maps. If the officers were at least allowed to go their own way! But no, they are almost forced to live at the casino—other relaxations which larger towns offer in plenty do not exist—and who would wish to spend every evening at the ale-house, drinking the same beer, for ever listening to the drivel of the same people, whose eternal subject is always the same old tiresome town scandals? One cannot stand it for ever, and other ale-houses are forbidden, being too much patronised by the riff-raff. So one goes to the casino and drinks out of pure weariness till one has had quite enough, and so the notorious scandals begin. Friction must be the result of this constant herding together, for, after all, these are all men of different minds, manners and education. In a large garrison one only goes to the casino if there is a definite purpose, for there are other means of driving dulness away than by immoderate drinking. But if a man is also given to running after women there is the devil to pay. Here you have the best example. In a large town there

Life in a Garrison Town

are enough women to satisfy him, but there being none here he makes up instead to the wives of his comrades."

"But these small frontier garrisons, nearly all of such great importance, require to be officered," Bleibtreu interposed.

"Of course," König replied earnestly; "nor should they send such inferior officers; rather should they send here men of unflinching principles and spotless record. Especially so if these frontier garrisons are of such vast importance, for these empty-headed toppers rarely become useful officers when a sudden emergency makes higher demands on their abilities. But every man looks upon it as a special punishment, or at least ill-luck, if he is sent to the frontier, and that often destroys his entire pleasure in playing the soldier. He moves Heaven and hell to be transferred to a better post. An officer of the Guards, or one in a crack regiment, passes the whole of his time of service in a great city, happy, glorious and victorious. But why are such as we left to languish away the best years of our life in such a God-forsaken hole?"

"Possibly on account of the cost of numerous transfers, which would mean a

Life in a Garrison Town

yearly increased demand on the revenue," said Bleibtreu.

"That is no reason; if they were in earnest it would be done. Every year hundreds of officers stream into Berlin to take temporary command. This over, each one could be sent to another garrison, and that would not cost more than to send him back to his old regiment. Other officers would then come to Berlin, and these again be sent to other garrisons. So there would be an even interchange of officers. Regiment X, which has sent an officer to be trained in Berlin, gets a fully-trained one in return, who before was attached to a regiment in Y. Besides these regular changes every year there might be supplementary ones for which some economy in another department could be made to pay.

"Instead of which the officers of the frontier garrison regiments — there being, with the exception of a few cadets, no new fund of young officers to draw from — are recruited from blackguards and such-like who have made themselves impossible in other garrisons, and of course not including such superior officers who regard a frontier regiment as a distinction, because they are

Life in a Garrison Town

then near the enemy, and, when the occasion offers, get the first chance.

“But even this is only an illusion. These days, when the prospects of war are continually becoming less, the advantage of being close to the enemy is only theoretical.

“According to the present system it should be a principle not to leave any officer more than two years, or, at most, three, in a frontier garrison. Then would the army be saved from much harm in respect both of its efficiency and its reputation. Besides, it would put an end in the world to a crying injustice.”

Bleibtreu nodded acquiescence, and when König had finished, he said:

“I agree with you in everything, Captain. But in spite of this you should try another garrison, for, in your place, after so many years of service, I would at least hold out till I could become Captain of the First Class. That will only be two or three years more, and then you will have the right to a much larger pension. Should the new garrison not be to your taste, why, there will still be ample time to send in your resignation.”

“Certainly — you are right. But I have

Life in a Garrison Town

already told you that I have lost all pleasure in my profession. I have laboured and striven for fifteen years. I have always done my duty to the satisfaction of my superiors, and received many distinctions. Now that I have been crippled in the running another is at once appointed to my place. Nobody cares about the results of my previous work: the machine goes on as if I had never existed. And if one can see no lasting success for the work of one's life it is so crushing, so mortifying! The able physician, the merchant, the lawyer would each be missed should he leave the scene of his activity, but nobody cares for us unless one happens to be a great general. As I can never again perform my duties with heartfelt pleasure and devotion, I prefer to go."

The decision of the Court of Honour was "Admonition for imperilling the standard of conduct befitting an officer." A further explanation was added that no officer has a right to put himself in a position where he is liable to be misjudged by the world. As this however had happened in the present instance, it was necessary that it should be made clear to Captain König that his con-

Life in a Garrison Town

duct was both incorrect and prejudicial to his honour as an officer. König read the official document with a cynical smile, and the same evening he sent in his resignation.

A few weeks before this the Colonel had also received a document, but from "above," and it was in a blue envelope. In it was intimated that, although his excellent services were acknowledged and valued, there was now no longer need for them. Hence no opposition was made when the Colonel expressed a wish to resign on the plea that he could no longer bear the fatigues of His Majesty's service.

One day a yellow furniture van drew up before the beautiful house at the end of the town, and everything was packed into it which was worth taking.

As for the Colonel, he and his family went quite modestly to the railway-station, where there was no one to greet them but the man-servant, who was ordered to see to the luggage. At the last moment, however, the nursemaid rushed up out of breath and clamoured for her last month's wages.

A shrill whistle, and the express train bore away a man who, with a mournful

Life in a Garrison Town

smile, allowed his eyes to wander over the roofs of the town which had been so blessed as to be the scene of five years of his strenuous activity.

Bleibtreu and König went away the same week, and with their departure the army lost two valuable soldiers and devoted adherents.

CHAPTER VIII

IT was after eight o'clock on a December evening. The shops and business houses were being noisily closed, on all sides could be heard the rattling of shutters as they fell and darkened the brilliantly-lighted shop windows. The asphalt seemed to be a moving mass of silent and hurrying people. Hurrying and scurrying they passed as if each one of them had to make up for lost time or lost opportunity, elegant women, men in their working clothes, others fashionably dressed, while an endless swarm of young girls poured out of the shops and business houses, mingling with those who strolled idly along in an obtrusive cloud of cheap perfume and with a liberal display of silk petticoats. Cabs and omnibuses tore along in endless succession, bearing to their destination smart couples, veiled ladies, stockbrokers, merchant princes and travellers, in fact all who wished to avoid the dust of the rabble or

Life in a Garrison Town

who were in a desperate hurry. Intermingled could be heard the shrill hootings of the motor or the ring of the omnibus bells, while smart carriages rolled noiselessly over the asphalt, and by the light of a shop window or a street lamp an occasional glance could penetrate into their dim interiors. The turmoil of a great city's streets, the myriad crowds, the hurry and scurry, all bore the stamp of enormous effort and activity; it was like an ant-hill in which each tiny insect performs its unwearied duty, and seeks, with restless industry, to labour only for the common good.

A well-dressed, handsome couple turned the corner into a badly-lighted side street, and made their way across the dirty road between the countless coster carts and waggons.

They stopped before a modest house and ascended the worn-out stone steps. The porter looked out of his lodge as they passed and favoured them with a very abrupt greeting. The pair had moved over from Hotel Monopole, and had been the subject of a good deal of speculation on his part.

They were ex-Lieutenant Borgert and Frau Leimann. They had made their way

Life in a Garrison Town

to London, hoping to be free there from pursuit, and to gain a livelihood in the immense city which provided daily bread for its countless millions.

Their money had soon vanished, for those who cannot reckon in the days of plenty can neither reckon in the days of distress. And so Borgert had been obliged to seek employment to save them from hunger, hard though it was for the pampered dissolute man, bred in idleness, to force himself to work. But he had already been dismissed by two business houses, and he had just returned from an unsuccessful search for work.

In despair he threw himself on the narrow sofa and covered his face with his hands, while Frau Leimann crouched in a small chair before the fire.

With dull eyes she watched the dying embers; the coals that now threw their warmth into the sordid room were their last. Neither spoke a word, and when Borgert at length broke the silence the woman started up in fear as if from some terrible dream.

“What will become of us?” he said softly.

Frau Leimann did not answer, but looked

Life in a Garrison Town

silently again into the fire, and there were tears in her eyes.

“Unless we can pay we shall be turned out of this house to-morrow; after that we shall have to sleep in the street.”

“You must work, George,” the woman replied, her voice choked with tears, and she tried to infuse some energy into the tones of her voice.

“Haven’t I tried?” answered he, shrugging his shoulders. “Haven’t I been turned out every time? And there is no good in my trying anything again. I can’t work, for I have never learned how.”

“But something must be done! We must find a way out of this!” she cried in despair. “If you mean to desert me now, you should not have lured me to my destruction.”

“I lured you?” asked Borgert with a sneer. “Who lured you? Was it not you who begged to go with me because you couldn’t stand your noble husband any longer?”

“If it was so, you, as a man, should have had sense enough to dissuade me from my folly.”

“Oh, you women! Can anybody dis-

Life in a Garrison Town

suade you when you have once got a notion fixed in your head! Now I have to bear the blame alone. You women of course are never to blame."

"Don't revile me, George. Pull yourself together and consider what can be done now. Help must come from somewhere."

"Here is help!" replied Borgert, and threw a small revolver on the table.

The woman shuddered, and for a moment she leant back against the wall, half-fainting, while her terror-stricken eyes stared at the little weapon, on the metal barrel of which the flames from the fire glinted.

"For God's sake," she stammered breathlessly — "are you mad?"

"On the contrary," he answered coolly, "it is the only way. This is not the first time I've thought of it. Is it not better to end at once this beggar's existence, this dog's life, rather than perhaps to drag out life in misery and doubt?"

Frau Leimann, immersed in thought, approached nearer to the dying embers as if their beneficent warmth had the power to wake to new life the frozen blood in her veins. Her eyes were set in a blank stare on a faded print which hung over the

Life in a Garrison Town

mantelpiece representing a banquet of some old English king. As if stunned she looked with vacant eyes at the picture, which so vividly depicted the joy of living. She did not perceive that Borgert had stolen noiselessly behind her.

There was a shot, and with a scream she fell to the ground. Her left arm was stretched out to the fire as if seeking aid, and the light of the flickering little flames played about the white hand from which life was slowly ebbing.

For a moment the murderer stared bewildered at the dead woman, then he turned the weapon on himself and, with a second shot, put an end to his life, thus expiating the many sins which had proved his undoing.

Four days after, in a lonely churchyard on the banks of the Thames, all that was mortal of these two was laid to rest. Nobody suspected who they were, nobody guessed the tragedy and sins of their lives now atoned for in death.

APPENDIX

SOME EXTRACTS FROM THE COURT-
MARTIAL PROCEEDINGS AGAINST
LIEUT. BILSE

*SOME EXTRACTS FROM THE
COURT-MARTIAL PROCEED-
INGS AGAINST LIEUT. BILSE*

THE following extracts from the proceedings of the court-martial, and some of the testimony of the principal witnesses, with the names of the officers described, may be of interest.

The trial took place in Metz from the 9th to the 13th of November, 1903. The scene of the court-martial was a rather small room, hardly accommodating twenty persons. Ten of these were German and French newspaper reporters, and the rest were the high officers constituting the court-martial, including the president, the prosecuting counsel, and the counsel for the defence, and also the General Commandant of Metz.

Just before the opening of the court-martial the accused was brought in. He was in uniform, but without his sword. He is a good-looking, slender,

Life in a Garrison Town

fair-haired young fellow, with a blonde moustache, and he wears eye-glasses. His appearance was very attractive, and his manners quiet and dignified.

Before the hearing of the witnesses, one day's session was entirely occupied in the reading of the novel in question.

In the novel Lieutenant Bilse is supposed to have described himself in the character of Lieutenant Bleibtreu.

In the course of his examination he said in regard to the impulse which led him to write this book: "I entered the army, for I felt that to be my vocation, and in the beginning I was quite happy. Later, when I was transferred to Lorraine, I recognised the great difference between life in the frontier garrison towns and the other garrisons in the empire. I observed evils and abuses which took away all my illusions. These I noticed especially in my garrison of Forbach. There have been already innumerable complaints about the condition of the frontier garrison towns, and so I thought that another voice raised in protest would do no harm. It was for this reason that I wrote my book.

"I had determined to use my imagination as

Appendix

far as possible, but it is very natural that in a book which is written for a purpose events should be described that are known to one and characters with which one is familiar. That is probably what happens to every author if he confines himself to his own experience. So the circle which I could describe was inevitably small, as I am still very young. Naturally it was far from my intention to portray persons and events in Forbach so accurately that they should be recognised.”

Questioned as to whether he was aware of the regulation which deals with the literary activity of men in military service, he replied that he knew it, but thought the order only applied to works of a technical and tactical description, and that it had, therefore, no reference to works of fiction, for which no permission was required, especially as many officers these days write novels without permission, and are engaged in journalistic work.

The hearing of the accused was followed by the testimony of the witnesses. The first one examined was Pharmacist Dreesen, of Forbach, called to testify to a charge of cowardice preferred against Major Fuchs (Colonel von Kronau in the novel), the commander of the regiment.

Life in a Garrison Town

Pres. You are said to have sent Major Fuchs a challenge, out of which he “sneaked” and saved himself at the expense of a woman?

Ans. He forbade his officers coming to my house, and the reason he gave was that my wife had made uncomplimentary remarks about them. I demanded an explanation, and was told that a lady of the regiment was responsible for the gossip. The Major therefore withdrew his prohibition and informed the assembled officers that it was a mistake, and at the same time he apologised to me.

Pres. Did you know that the Major punished such officers as still visited you?

Ans. Yes.

Pres. What did you do on hearing of this?

Ans. I went to a friend, Justice Weber, and asked him to take my challenge to the Major, but he regretted to be unable to serve me as he had himself invited the Major to a party the next day. So I asked Staff-Surgeon Pollack, who went to him. The Major referred him to a lady, the wife of Captain Ey of the regiment. When Pollack came back and told me, I said: “Do not waste time; if he cannot give a satisfactory explanation, challenge him.” So Dr. Pollack went back to the Major, who thereupon went with him to Frau Ey

Appendix

(Frau Stark), who confessed that she had possibly been mistaken in what she had repeated.

Pres. Did it seem to you as if Frau Ey was willing to take the blame on herself to protect the Major?

Ans. I cannot say; it is now three or four years ago.

Pres. Further, it is said in the novel that the Major was very unpopular among the civilians. Do you know from experience?

Ans. Well, he was not exactly beloved.

Pres. Was he cut?

Ans. No, not exactly, but he was never invited.

Pres. Did you recognise all the characters in the book?

Ans. Yes. The most lifelike are Frau Ey and Major Fuchs. All Forbach was full of it; even the ordinary day labourers had read the book.

Major Fuchs (Colonel von Kronau), fifty years old, has been at Forbach since 1899. Obviously Major Fuchs is identical with Colonel von Kronau, even to the tear in his eye. Recognised himself in the portrait. In regard to the challenge there is no truth in it except that in 1900 Frau Ey repeated to him what Frau Dreesen had said, that

Life in a Garrison Town

though the officers were ready enough to accept invitation from the civilians and eat their fill at their houses, they never in return invited these to the regiment's tennis club. He considered it an insult that the lady should require an equivalent for her hospitality. He therefore prohibited his officers from going there. When this became town talk Herr Dreesen sent Dr. Pollack for an explanation.

Pres. He is supposed to have brought you a challenge ?

Ans. Not that I know of. Dr. Pollack and I went to Frau Ey and she said she was possibly mistaken, and so I expressed my regrets and the prohibition was withdrawn.

Pres. It is affirmed in the novel that you showed no proper energy in dealing with the criminal intimacy between Lieutenant Block (Kolberg) and Frau Erdler (Kahle) which was long known to everybody, and you were most incompetent in the conduct of the whole affair ?

Ans. I am not aware of that. Erdler was transferred to Spandau, where he is still captain. His wife stayed here some time longer in the family of Lieutenant Lindner. One day she disappeared and came home very late, and it was found,

Appendix

the result of a torn letter pieced together, that she had gone to meet Lieutenant Block. The result was that Erdler and Block fought, and then Erdler got a divorce from his wife. It is not true that Block was not punished, for he was transferred to the 15th Battalion stationed at Strasbourg.

Pres. Do you know what punishment Block received for his criminal intimacy that resulted in this divorce?

Ans. As far as I know a reprimand. For the duel he was sentenced to six months' imprisonment.

Pres. What in regard to the influence of Frau Ey over you? She is supposed to have used that power to have her husband promoted to the rank of major?

Ans. My wife and I associate with Frau Ey, but she has no influence whatever over me.

Pres. It is said that you made her complaints the subject of official discussion, and ordered your officers to wear dancing-spurs because her dress had been torn at a ball, and that you also reprimanded them for not kissing her hand, which was in a dirty riding-glove of her husband's?

Ans. I remember the order, but not that Frau Ey was the cause.

Life in a Garrison Town

Pres. What about your command that your officers should not again go to Saarbrück?

Ans. I gave that order because they were all running into debt there, the married ones as well as the single, and that even after several had to send in their resignations because of such debts. I wished to keep them all under control. The order has now been countermanded.

Pres. It is said that you insisted so peremptorily on the payment of casino debts, that in consequence your officers had to borrow from usurers, with the result that they got into their clutches?

Ans. Some of the gentlemen owed as much as 600 to 700 marks, and there were debts to the casino of 2000 which had to be paid to keep it going. I had often insisted on payment; the demand was therefore not unexpected.

Pres. It is said you were in the habit of ordering such expensive bowls of punch at the casino parties that it caused the officers great and unnecessary expense?

Ans. If it was done it was with the consent of all. At any rate, as I always use cheap wines, the expense could not have exceeded 2 marks per head.

Pres. It is said you refused to give ex-Sergeant Apel (Schmitz) his sick pension?

Appendix

Ans. I do not remember that.

Pres. It is also said that at a costume festival of the regiment the champagne flowed in streams, and you, dressed as a Hungarian magnate, were soon half-seas over?

Ans. The festival is accurately described and so are the costumes with the exception of mine. There was a good deal of drinking, but I did not lose my self-control.

Pres. Is it true that Frau Ey was in the habit of bullying the non-commissioned officers, and that she was on very bad terms with her husband?

Ans. Never heard of it. Never knew the pair to fling slippers at each other's heads. His manners are rather rough, and possibly he may have said "hold your jaw." He certainly was not incompetent, or witness would not have recommended him for promotion.

Pres. It is said that Frau Ey often fetched her husband home from the ale-house when he was tipsy, to the amusement of the people about. Was he often in this condition?

Ans. No; he was only exhilarated.

Pres. It is said that the relation between Lieutenant Koch (Leimann in the novel) and his wife was very bad. What do you know of the criminal

Life in a Garrison Town

intimacy of this woman and Lieutenant Witte (Borgert)?

Ans. Officially I know nothing.

Pres. What do you know of Lieutenant Koch's attempt to induce Captain Bandel to embezzle money from the squadron funds?

Ans. The matter has been settled by the Court of Honour, and Captain Bandel exonerated. I know that many notes were in circulation endorsed by Koch and Witte for each other, and to the value of many thousand marks.

Pres. Have these notes ever been paid?

Ans. No.

Pres. Is it true that Koch is away on leave?

Ans. Yes. He has sent in his papers and they have been accepted.

Pres. Are the descriptions in the book of Koch and Witte accurate?

Ans. Quite.

Captain Ey (Stark) stationed at Forbach for seven years. Never ill-treated his wife. She has nothing whatever to do with his regiment, nor has she any influence on the major. The description of the inspection of the stables is not accurate. His wife is much interested in horses. Is greatly

Appendix

annoyed at the description of Captain Stark, which was undoubtedly intended for him. Takes his evening drink, of course, but his voice is hoarse only as the result of shouting orders. The musical evening is very accurately described in the novel.

Pres. In one passage it is said you were quite drunk at the White Swan, and that your wife came, made a scene, and took you home amid general hilarity.

Ans. It is true that my wife came several times to fetch me, but not in the way described in the novel.

Captain Bandel (König), aged 41, in Forbach since 1891. Is suspected of having helped to write the book with Bilse, the more so as he has been suspended from service since January 1st. Bandel acknowledges being very intimate with Bilse. Knew nothing about the book until it was published. Had often talked with Bilse about the scandals of the frontier garrison life as described in the newspapers. Did not believe Bilse had any intention of harming his comrades. Found him one of the few men in the service who never speaks ill of his brother officers.

Pres. What do you know about the duel with Pharmacist Dreesen and the relation between Ma-

Life in a Garrison Town

Major Fuchs and Frau Ey? Is it true that he tried to shield himself behind her skirts?

Ans. Is it necessary to go into that? Everybody knows about it. I remember one day Frau Ey came to me and said with tears in her eyes, "There was nothing else for me to do. I couldn't let the apothecary kill father Fuchs, so I sacrificed myself for him." Dreesen is an expert shot. Later, when we were again permitted to go to the Dreesens', and the Major became very devoted to Frau Ey, I felt that something was up. Lieutenant Witte (Borgert) told us one day that he overheard the Major say to Frau Ey, "Do not worry. I shall not drop you"; to which she repeated, "You had better not, or I shall scratch your eyes out!"

Pres. It is said in the book that his superiors had noticed the incompetency of Captain Stark (Ey), and that Oberst von Kronau (Major Fuchs) refers to this in his interview with Frau Stark (Frau Ey)?

Ans. I heard that the commandant from Strasbourg was severe in his censure on the condition of the stable.

Pres. Do you know if Major Fuchs made Frau Ey's complaints the subject of remark at a service conference?

Appendix

Ans. Yes. It was about the use of dancing-spurs and the hand-kiss Lieutenant Bipse refused to give.

Pres. What about Frau Ey's use of troop-horses?

Ans. She drove two and rode one. Once, when I mounted my little boy on a troop-horse I was reprimanded for disobeying orders, while Frau Ey used the troop-horses every day with the consent of the commanding officer.

Pres. What are your relations with Lieutenants Koch and Witte?

Ans. We were once quite friendly, but since a certain time we are on very bad terms.

Pres. You are supposed to have been asked by these two to make an illegal use of the squadron funds for their benefit, and when you refused they denounced you as having once made such an attempt? You were then called before the Court of Honour and suspended from service?

Ans. It was proved that I never made such an attempt, but I pretended to, to show them the difficulty and danger, and so prevent any further attempts at borrowing.

Pres. According to the novel the inquiry took a long time?

Life in a Garrison Town

Ans. I have been suspended from service since last January. I wished to send in my resignation in March, but could not because this matter was not settled.

Pres. Was yours the only case before the Court of Honour?

Ans. No; there were new scandals every week, and ample material.

Pres. Do you know anything of the pecuniary circumstances of Lieutenants Koch and Witte?

Ans. Their circumstances were very bad, and they were deeply in debt.

Pres. Do you know that Lieutenant Witte was suspected of criminal intimacy with Frau Koch?

Ans. Yes.

Pres. Do you believe that all can recognise themselves in the characters of this book?

Ans. Only such as have a bad conscience.

Pres. What about the incident in the novel relating to the ill-treatment of a soldier-servant (Röse) by Borgert (Witte)?

Ans. Had heard of such an affair.

Pres. What do you know of Lieutenant Witte's endeavours to suppress the story?

Ans. Remember it was ordered that this man's mother, who lived in Forbach and who took offi-

Appendix

cers to lodge, should have no more sent to her, but Lieutenant Witte, in spite of this, induced a newly arrived officer to take up his lodgings there, for the reason that the woman had threatened to report him (Lieutenant Witte).

Pres. It is also said that Lieutenant Habenicht (Specht) reported a sentry falsely for sleeping at his post ?

Ans. Of this I know nothing.

Questioned as to whether he believed the denunciation against him of dishonestly using the squadron funds, and of which the Court of Honour had acquitted him, had emanated from Lieutenants Koch and Witte, witness declared it must have, for as soon as he refused to lend these two any more money, he was denounced, and this action was begun against him.

The hearing of the witnesses Koch and Witte followed, but at the request of the members of the Court Martial, it was conducted *in camera* in the interest of morality and discipline.

First Lieutenant Habenicht recognised himself in the character of Lieutenant Specht because of a circumstance in the novel relating to a notice posted regarding the forage-master, Sergeant Schmitz,

Life in a Garrison Town

who disobeyed the commands of Sergeant-Major Roth, which notice was nearly identical with one he had himself posted. Witness further said on being questioned as to why he was transferred to Forbach, that he had never considered his transference as a punishment; on the contrary, he was at the same time promoted to be First Lieutenant.

Pres. It is said you went in full uniform to the train to meet your mistress, and that she carried provisions for which she had paid?

Ans. I acknowledge my intimacy with such a person, like the rest of my comrades, but I never went to meet her in uniform. I protest against this.

Pres. What do you know of the criminal intimacy between Frau Koch and Lieutenant Witte?

Ans. I only know that they were on friendly terms.

The next witness was Lieutenant Block (Kolberg). The request of the counsel for the prosecution that this witness should also be heard *in camera* in the interest of public morality, was refused.

Pres. What were your relations with Frau Erdler (Kahle)? Did you know she was divorced?

Ans. Yes.

Pres. In the book we are told that you were on

Appendix

the most intimate terms with her, that she came to see you in your room, and that your orderly had made very compromising discoveries there. That when Frau Erdler was staying at Lieutenant Lindner's she received a note from you appointing a meeting?

Ans. I did write to Frau Erdler, but I was never her lover. The matter was submitted to the Court of Honour. Her husband and I fought a duel, for which I am at present undergoing six months' imprisonment.

Pres. Do you know why Frau Erdler was divorced?

Ans. Not exactly, but I know she lost her case.

Pres. It is said that after Captain Erdler was transferred to Spandau you sent a very compromising letter to Frau Erdler, who was then the guest of Lieutenant Lindner?

Ans. It is true I did write a letter to Frau Erdler and asked her to meet me. We took a walk together and got lost, and returned four hours later than we intended.

Pres. You were a witness in the divorce case and denied any intimacy?

Ans. Yes.

Pres. Later you fought a duel with Captain Erdler?

Life in a Garrison Town

Ans. Yes, in Spandau.

Pres. After which you were punished?

Ans. Yes, I was dismissed from the service, but, on an appeal for mercy, was instead only punished with a reprimand.

Pres. Do you know if the divorce was granted because of your testimony?

Ans. No.

First Lieutenant Lindner recognised himself as Weil in the novel.

Pres. Are the circumstances true, as there described, of Frau Erdler's presence in your house?

Ans. Yes, we were very intimate with the Erdlers. He was a fine man, and she seemed a most honourable woman, from whom I never heard an improper word nor suspected of an improper action. On the contrary, she became very intimate with us at the time the scandal about Lieutenant Witte and Frau Koch was made public, and she was most indignant about it. Indeed she told my wife that with the exception of her no one was left in the regiment with whom she cared to associate. She was a delicate woman and had some heart trouble. When her husband was transferred to Spandau, she begged my wife to let her

Appendix

stay with us until the moving was over. During the last days of her visit she changed very much and became very excitable. One day she received a letter, read it, tore it up, and threw the pieces into the fireplace. She explained that she was invited that afternoon to Frau Goeben's. She went out, and as late at night she had not returned, my wife became very anxious, so I sent my orderly to the Goebens' to see her home. He did not find her there, nor, it seems, had she been invited. Upon which I sent him to Major Fuchs to find out if she was there, and she was not. At eleven o'clock we heard her creep into her room. My wife had in the meantime picked up the torn letter out of the fireplace. It said: "My treasure, I am waiting for you at the usual place." I was furious to find how this woman had abused our hospitality. I at once went to Major Fuchs with the letter as it was my duty to do under such circumstances. He said: "I do not want to know what is in the letter. Turn the woman out of doors. She has ceased to be the wife of an officer." In the morning when Frau Erdler came down I requested her to leave my house. I have never seen her since.

Pres. Did Lieutenant Bilse know of this event and the letter?

Life in a Garrison Town

Ans. Yes. Lieutenant Witte (Borgert) read the letter to the officers in the casino.

Counsel for the defence. I should like to ask witness a question as to the reputation of the Koch-Witte family.

Ans. It is easily described by a couplet circulated amongst the officers:—

“ Im Hause Koch und Witte
Da herrscht Zucht und Sitte.”

In the house of Koch and Witte
Modesty reigns and chastity.

Pres. What do you know of the relation of Frau Koch and Lieutenant Witte from personal experience?

Ans. Have seen them meet in a *cul-de-sac* behind my house in the evening, evidently by appointment. Their intimacy was very conspicuous. Have seen her take a rose from her corsage, kiss it, and make signals with it to Lieutenant Witte. The casino steward told me certain very compromising incidents concerning them. Possibly the relationship between the two was correct at first, but was suspected when they were seen constantly together at Saarbrück, where they were the talk of the town.

Counsel for the prosecution (to the accused). Do

Appendix

you affirm your description of this affair to be only the work of your imagination ?

Ans. I repeat that I knew something of these circumstances and I considered them of sufficient interest to use them as a background for my story.

First Lieutenant Koch (Leimann) bitterly blames Lieutenant Lindner for telling such unfounded scandal about his wife, who was now dead.

(This was followed by a violent altercation between the two officers.)

Pres. Witness has sworn to tell the whole truth.

Adjutant Schmidt recognises himself in the novel as Adjutant Müller.

Pres. By what description ?

Ans. My big appetite. (Laughter.)

Pres. You are accused of always being ready for a fight when drunk ?

Ans. Acknowledge being irritable when drunk, but not ready to come to blows.

Pres. You are said, when drunk, to have reported a sentry without any reason who got fourteen days' arrest in consequence, or is that imaginary ?

Ans. I never reported a sentry.

Life in a Garrison Town

Testimony of non-commissioned officers.

Lehmann, described in the novel as Sergeant-Major Roth, who on occasion of his birthday got drunk in company of Sergeant Apel (Schmitz) and confessed to him with disgraceful frankness that he had a way of keeping their wages from reservists and of squeezing money out of rich one-year volunteers. He complained that he had been described as a perjurer, a scoundrel and a thief, and when he went to Saarbrück recently people jeered at him and avoided him.

Counsel for defence. Lieutenant Bilsé denies that he meant to describe you.

Ans. Three things convince me that I am meant — the sergeant-major, the picture of Bismarck in my house which I bought from the Herr Lieutenant for fifteen marks (laughter), and also the sofa on which we sit in the novel, which I also bought from him for forty marks.

Accused. It is true that this man bought these articles from me. At that time I went away on leave and these non-commissioned officers pestered me to sell them my furniture. This man came among others. I asked him first how much he wished to give and sold the things to him at a price much below their value.

Appendix

Pres. (to Lehmann). Did you punish the blacksmith Apel (Schmitz) for disobeying orders, and is it true that after having caroused with Sergeant Apel you reported him because of some trouble in the stable and that he was sentenced to six weeks and one day's arrest in consequence?

Ans. Yes.

Pres. Did the attack on New Year's Eve take place as described in the book?

Ans. No; that is imaginary.

The next witness was ex-Sergeant Apel (Schmitz), employed now in a factory at Burbach. Recognised himself in the novel as the blacksmith Schmitz. The incidents in the book are correct. He was punished by six weeks' arrest and one day's solitary confinement for disobedience. At the end of his sentence he was refused reinstatement, and also his sick pension money. He energetically denied that, according to the novel, he had become a socialist. He could have, had he wished, but he had remained faithful to his king.

The deliberation of the Court Martial lasted two hours, and then the following Verdict was announced:

Life in a Garrison Town

“The accused, Lieutenant Oswald Bilse, is judged guilty of having libelled his superior officers and others higher in rank than himself, in a manner which has resulted in serious consequences to them. Further, he has disobeyed a stringent military order, namely: the Imperial regulation regarding the literary activity of persons in military service. He is therefore condemned to six months’ imprisonment and to be dismissed from the service. Furthermore, the novel, ‘Aus einer kleinen Garnison’ (‘Life in a Garrison Town’), which contains said libels, shall be withdrawn from circulation, and the plates and forms shall be destroyed.”

The judgment added that the serious consequences to the officers libelled consist in their being made ridiculous in the eyes of their troops as well as of civilians, and that they have been injured both in their reputation and their usefulness. In considering the sentence it should be said on behalf of the accused that the book, which is no ordinary pamphlet, contains matters of undeniable value, in particular the account of the intimate life in frontier garrison towns, the debts contracted by officers, the remarks on duelling, life in penal garrisons, and transference as a method of punishment.

Appendix

At the close of the proceedings the accused, accompanied by an infantry officer, was taken back to the military hospital, as he was, because of ill health, under medical supervision. On leaving the Court-room many officers and civilians shook his hand.

The sequel to the Court Martial of Lieutenant Bilse was officially announced in Berlin on December 30th. It affects five of the officers who play a part in Lieutenant Bilse's book :

“ *Major Fuchs*, Commander of Transport, Battalion 16, stationed at Forbach, has been allowed to resign with permission to wear the uniform of the 12th Uhlán Regiment, and with legal pension.

“ *Captain Bandel*, allowed to resign with legal pension.

“ *Captain Ey*, retired on half-pay, with legal pension and appointed district officer at Gnesen.

“ *Lieutenant Koch*, retired on half-pay with legal pension.

“ *Lieutenant Habenicht*, retired on half-pay with legal pension.”

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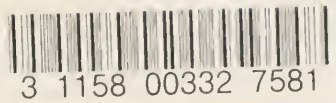
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