

Westphalian sketches from a Westphalian pen.

When we speak of Westphalia, we are referring to a large, very varied stretch of country, varied not only in the widely distributed taproots of its population, but also in everything which forms the physiognomy of the country or significantly affects it – climate, physical geography, source of income and as a consequence, in culture, customs, character and even bodily appearance of its populace. Few parts of our Germany, therefore, have need of such many faceted elucidation.

There is, indeed, one element which, to the casual observer, gives the whole, with the exception of a few minor frontier provinces, a breath of uniformity. By this I mean that of the same (Catholic) religion cult and of the same former life under the croziers, which, in its fixed form and total constriction of local affairs, always gives a stamp of isolation to the character of the people and nature itself, which is sometimes contemplative, sometimes working within itself, that only a long series of years and the succession of several generations growing up under outside influences, might entirely efface. The sharper eye will, nevertheless, very soon be drawn to gradations which, at their extreme points, intensify almost to contrast and with the folksiness, mainly still preserved, bestow an interest upon the country, which perhaps a better, but mingled state could not excite.

Here, hill and flat land, as everywhere, also seem to want to signify the sharper boundary lines; but as far as the people is concerned, circumstances disturbed the usual sequence and instead of turning itself back into nature out of flat, moorlandish Muensterland through the county of Mark and the bishopric of Paderborn, up into the hill-cones close to the high mountain chain of Sauerland (Duchy of Westphalia), here the Sauerlanders, on the contrary, form the transition from peaceful heath dwellers to wild, almost southerly inspired occupants of the Teutoburg Forest. However, let us leave this aside for the moment and take a look at the landscape, independently of its inhabitants, in as far as the effect of same (through culture, etc.) on its outward shape allows.

We have left the banks of the Lower Rhine at Wesel and are approaching, through the still genuinely rhenish Duchy of Cleves which is unjustly counted as Westphalia on the map, the border of that country. The gradual fading away of greenery and industriousness, the spread of the gleaming sand dunes and a certain half-hearted, dreamy atmosphere and also the ever more blond and softer faces of the children looking out of the few and far between hovels tell us that we have crossed it; we are in the border stretches of the Bishopric of Münster. A bleak district! Vast stretches of sand, interrupted on the horizon only here and there by little wooded areas and individual groups of trees. The air, impregnated with sea winds, seems to quiver only in its sleep. A gentle ripple, similar to the rustling of spruce trees, passes over the surface and sows fine gravel in glowing strips up to the next dune where the shepherd, in semi somnabular contemplation, is knitting his socks and taking as little notice of us as do his equally sleepy dog and his moorland sheep. Flocks of bathing crows lie across the path and do not flutter up until we can almost grasp them, then to settle down again, sideways, regarding us in passing with a prophetic eye, *oculo torvo sinistroque*.

From individual juniper bushes the plaintive, gull-like shrieks of young peewits break forth, which like wader birds, slither around in their prickly refuge sticking out their feathery tufts now here, now there.

Then, about every mile, a cottage before the doors of which a couple of children roll about in the sand and catch beetles; at all events, a wandering naturalist who kneels beside his overfilled knapsack and smilingly examines the delicate fossilised shells and sea urchins which,

like models of an earlier creation, lie strewn all around here. And we have named everything which enlivens a long day's journey, which has no poetry to boast of, other than that of an almost virginal solitude and a soft, dreamlike light in which the wings of fantasy spread involuntarily. Meanwhile, friendlier images gradually begin to appear, scattered areas of grassland in the hollows, more frequent and fresher groups of trees greet us as outposts of approaching fertility and we soon find ourselves in the heart of Muensterland, in a district which is as pleasant as the total lack of hills, rocks and rushing streams can ever permit, and which lies like a great oasis in the ocean of sand dusting it from all sides, toward Holland, Oldenburg and Cleves. Peaceful to a high degree it is, yet does not have the character of a desert. Rather, few landscapes may be met, that are so full of greenery, song of nightingale and flower blossom, while one who wanders in from less damp districts is nearly deafened by the blare of countless songbirds which find their food in the clay soil. Waste steppe has shrunk to moderate grazing areas thinly veiled by a covering of colourful moorland flowers, from which swarms of blue, yellow and milky-white butterflies rise up at every step. Almost every one of these pasture areas contains a stretch of water, surrounded by irises from which thousands of little damsel flies hang like tiny coloured rods, while those of the larger type buzz to the centre of the pond where they drop down into the leaves of the yellow water lilies like golden brooches into enamelled dishes and there lie in wait for the water insects upon which they feed. Small but numerous woodland areas border the whole. All are deciduous trees, in particular a stand of oak of splendid beauty, which provides the Dutch navy with masts; in every tree a nest, on every branch a jolly bird and everywhere a freshness of the greenery and a scent of leaves such as is the case elsewhere only after a spring shower. Dwellings, lengthy, peeping out from beneath the branches, with low projecting roofs, seem to be keeping the midday rest and watching the cattle with a half-closed eye; cattle, light coloured and spotted, stand out against the green of the woodland or the pale horizon like a herd of fallow deer and push randomly in changing groups, since these heaths are common lands and everybody keeps at least sixty or more head of cattle. What is not woodland and heath is *Kamp*¹, that is to say, a parcel of private property used as arable or pasture and, in order to avoid the trouble of tending the herd, depending on the extent of the property or the conditions, hedged in by a high earthen embankment surmounted by deciduous trees.

This takes in the most fertile stretches of the community's land and one usually meets long rows of such parcels in succession and side by side. They are joined by footpaths and little gates which one enters with that pleasant curiosity with which one wanders through the rooms of a roofless house. The meadows especially, also give an extremely serene aspect through the profusion and diversity of the flowers and herbs among which the elite of stock-breeding, heavy Friesians, ruminates overfed and snorts at the passer-by as indolently and haughtily as is allowed only to easy circumstances on four legs. Ditches and ponds intersect the terrain here, as everywhere, and would, like all stagnant water, be loathsome if it were not counteracted mainly by a white blanket of blossom, rankly overgrown by forget-me-nots, and the aromatic fragrance of the wild mint. The banks of the idly creeping streams are also provided with this adornment and thus soften the unease that a sleepy river always engenders. In short, this tract presents a lively solitude, a joyful loneliness with Nature, such as we have not met elsewhere. One comes upon villages at most once an hour along the way and the scattered tenanted farms lie so hidden behind embankment hedges and trees that only a distant cockcrow, or a halo of rooftops waving from its leafy wig, points it out to you and you believe yourself to be alone with grass and birds as on the Fourth Day of Creation, until a

slow “gee up!” or “whoa!” from behind the next hedge wakes you from the reverie, or a loudly barking farm dog makes you aware of the strip of roof that shows like a recumbent beam through the earthen bank’s scrub just alongside you.

The country’s physiognomy has been like this until today and it will never be like that in forty years. Population and luxury are growing visibly, with them demands and industry. The smaller picturesque heaths are being divided, cultivation of slow growing deciduous forest is being neglected in favour of securing a quicker return from conifer timber and forests of spruce and endless seas of grain will soon have partly reshaped the character of the landscape, as its inhabitants desist more and more from age old manners and customs. Let us, therefore, finally comprehend in its characteristics, what now exists, before the slippery layer which is gradually flowing over Europe, has also glued over this tranquil corner of the world.

We called this area of Muensterland an oasis, now wastes of steppe, sand and pine lead us via Paderborn, the former capital and border town, into the bishopric of the same name, where the plain gradually rises into hills of which the highest, toward the other side of the border, do not exceed the altitude of a moderate mountain. The physiognomy of the country is, by far, less attractive than that of its inhabitants, rather, it is a fairly unstimulating transition from the plain to the range of hills, without the mildness of the former or the grandeur of the latter. Endless cornfields stretching across hill and vale, testifying to the fertility of the soil but tiring to the eye. Springs and little streams which flow right merrily but quite without any sound and the fantastic leaps of mountain streams. Stony ground which, wherever one thrusts in a spade, provides excellent building material, but nowhere does a craggy wall protrude apart from artificial cliffs of quarries. Low hills of ordinary shape, among which only those that are wooded can lay any claim to charm, together form a slightly projecting whole. Even the classic Teutoburger Forest, the only woody mountain range that is imposing, not because of its height, but by reason of its extent and occasional picturesque shapes, has lately been so cleared and afforested in straight lines that only with the aid of the red (ferruginous) earth constantly crackling under our footsteps and also the innumerable flying glow-worms which, of a summer night, hang their little lanterns on every twig, and a lively imagination, can we dream of *Halter, Stone, Grass and Quarrel*². Yet the country is not lacking in individual points where the coming together of several little beauty spots brings forth really enchanting lots; pretty green glens, for example, with brooks trickling through them, where looking uphill through slim trunks can be right pleasant and even make one feel a little giddy. If even a little chateau also stands up there and a stone quarry opposite, which to the eye is a fair substitute for cliffs, then the wandering painter will surely pull out his sketchbook and the neighbouring lowlander return home from his holiday trip with material for long stories to tell and delights to be relived. A village at the foot of the mountain can, incidentally, only spoil the picture, since the Paderborn bishopric decidedly has the most miserable and smoky specimens to show in all Westphalia, a circumstance to which over-population and imprudence of the inhabitants contribute in equal part.

As soon as we have crossed the Paderborn border, regardless of whether to the right or the left, the highly romantic part of Westphalia begins. To the right, the ecclesiastical principality of Corvey, to the left the county of Mark, the former being the Weser landscapes, rightly famous, the other encompassing the beautiful Ruhr and Lenne bank. These two provinces display great affinity with Nature, only that sailing vessels on the one and the stamping of hammers and works on the other enliven them. Both are equally smiling and productive, adorned with the same undulating, richly leaved ridges into which bolder shapes and cliff

walls crowd bit by bit, until the Weser landscape, like a beauty who has reached her zenith, gradually sinks back and almost withers, while ever more bold hill contours force their way into the heart of the Sauerland and intensify, via greatest romantic wildness, to bleakness.

It has often been said that the Porta Westfalica makes but a minor contribution to that series of pictures and constitutes the last doubtful heyday of the already faded Weser-beauty, nevertheless, the more charming is the riverbank in its budding, blooming and ripening, the little Corvey country and the adjoining tracts alongside up to the border of Electoral Hesse: such gentle hill slopes and blending valleys where water and land seem to play tag and to breathe upon one another with their coolness; such pleasant valleys of corn alternating with meadow and wood; such coquette twistings of the river, that we imagine ourselves strolling in a garden. The landscape becomes ever more diverse, ever more richly shaded by deciduous and conifer trees; lines, sharp and forming waves. The Wildberg, behind the old chateau of Wehern and "Turk's" ruin³, raises its thorny "coffin lid" out of airy hills which lie around it like children tired of their game, and appears to regard only the Katthangenberg opposite to be worthy of its attention, which stares at it from red eyes, like the skeleton of some primeval monster. The banks start to become steep from here onward, with every quarter of an hour steeper, hollower and more rocky and soon we see, from an hour-long cliff enclosed by walls and balustrades, the ships gliding along below us, tiny like children's toys, and hear the calls of the boatmen, thin like the call of gulls while high above us young leafy branches wave down to us from the rock terrace, like the hands of beautiful women from stronghold battlements.

The landscape has reached its peak at the neoclassic Herstelle chateau and, after a goodly view, goes along the Weser and toward a dizzying view down at the little Hesse border town of Karlshafen, flattening out and everywhere decay. The county of Mark offers pictures similar to these, of a romanticism appearing in equal measure somewhat gentler, somewhat more vigorous, and by the same means. Yet the landscape here is more bustling, richer in the sound of springs and echo, the rivers smaller and more rapid, and instead of having sails gliding past us, we ourselves stride past foaming weirs and mill wheels and hear once more the beat of workshops, for we are in a factory-land. Also the region is, at first, tinged by the proximity of the Muensterland, even milder, the valleys more dreamy and it appears by contrast, where it approaches the actual Sauerland, even bolder than that of the Weser. The "ocean of rocks" not far from Menden, for example; a valley where giants seem to have played with huge rock dice, and the ravine below the ruined chateau and the well known Klusenstein stalactite cavern may doubtless claim a place of honour in the field of the savage-romantic. Remarkable the latter and these very same rock walls pushing rigidly against one another, on which the goat path, scarcely a foot wide, wends its way; on top the old walling, in the centre the black jaws of hell, below in the cauldron the din and foaming of the mill that one can reach only by means of planks and footbridges and where it is always twilight – are supposed to have provided the erstwhile famous Spies⁴ with the framework for one of his worst penny dreadfuls ("*The Devil's Mill in the Valley of Hell*", I believe). Indeed, these are exceptions; the landscapes are uniformly gentle and would be decidedly dreamy without the industrial liveliness of their inhabitants. As soon as we cross over the area, the mildness, meanwhile, melts away and faces us more and more as only individual parts, as it were, gone astray, which stimulate as surprisingly, by reason of their seldomness, as previously did the bolder contours with which we are henceforth almost fed up through walks lasting for days.

Sauerlanders boast of a glorious origin for their name. Charles the Great is supposed to have said: "*This has become a sour land to me*", and in

reality, when we wend our way through the interior's gullies, barricaded by great rocks, beneath walls whose unclimability we view with a giddy eye and out of which colossal balconies reach, broad and firm enough to take the weight of a horde of wild mountain-men, then we do not doubt the truth of these words, whether they were spoken or not. The mountain range is rich in water and in the valley gorges the din of streams rushing, boiling, down is almost deafening, where, by contrast, the birdsong in the spruce forests, becoming more prevalent, dies out more and more, until we finally see only gerfalcon and hawk wheeling and hear their piercing predatory whistling answering high in the air. Staring back at us everywhere are black entrances to tunnels, crevasses and stalactite caves, their depths in some cases still not fathomed, and to which legends are attached, of highwaymen, mountain spirits and lost travellers starved to death.

Taken altogether, it is in no way inferior to the wildest parts of the Black Forest; peculiarly, when it begins to get dark, it takes a lot of cold-bloodedness to ward off at least a poetic shudder when owl and eagle-owl come alive in the crevasses and send out their echo from wall to wall, and when the tall furnaces yawn like glowing maws out of the glens, blowing up erratic columns of sparks, making tree and rock all around shiver with red firelight.

In this manner, the landscape increasingly takes on a wildness – at the end, showing cliffs on which lost goats have been seen wandering about for days – until the jagged shapes of the mountains gradually give way to bald cones on which patches of snow still lie at the height of May, the treeline almost completely dies out and at last the locality presents, at the "Winterberg", a picture only of desolate bleakness.

We already briefly outlined the character of the indigenous people in the foregoing chapter and said that, despite the ordinary influence of Nature upon her pupils, the stamp of the mountain-dweller upon the Paderborner comparatively brought up, both morally and physically, in a tame country, is decidedly more prominent than with the Sauerlander who is much more entitled through his surroundings.

The reason is obvious: in the commercial relationships of the latter, which open his homeland to strangers and propel him abroad himself, where, amidst commercial culture, customs daily more dilute the blood of his stock through external marriages, and we must wonder, rather, at the power of a strain which, watered down by so many sources, still generally shows a sharp, firm line as does the Rhine through Lake Constance.

The Sauerlander is uncommonly tall and well built, perhaps the largest race in Germany, but little of lissom shapes. Colossal physical strength is more commonly encountered with him than nimbleness. His features, although somewhat broad and flattened, are very pleasant and, with predominantly light brown or blond hair, his long-lashed blue eyes have all the gleam and dark look of a negro. His physiognomy is bold and open, his bearing unaffected, so that one is inclined to take him for a guileless child of nature, rather than any one of his fellow Westphalians. However, Sauerlanders are not without a strong dash of cunning, determination and practical sagacity, while even the otherwise most limited among them will almost always have the advantage over the brightest Muensterlander.

He is very determined, is not concerned with details and appears to be born to trading and good advancement rather than trained for it and by it. His preferences are impetuous but changeable and, little as he surrenders them for the sake of somebody's wish, the easier does he decide to do so out of his own judgement or whim. He is a restless and, for the most part, lucky speculator, from the factory owner who rides in a carriage with four-in-hand, to the scruffy pedlar offering "cherries for old

raggs". And here we find the only nobility of Westphalia, which attaches itself to the merchant class through forges, paper mills and salterns. Although Roman Catholic by denomination, the factory folk are for all that, in many places, halfhearted and laugh only too often at the bands of pious pilgrims who, standing before their icons, dusty and panting, sing off their litanies and on whom the tune of the money that they bring in seems to be by far the most profitable music. For the rest, the Sauerlander possesses many an attractive side. He is plucky, level-headed, of a keen but cool mind; although, in general, calculating, capable of making significant sacrifices out of a sense of honour and even the least among them possesses a flight of chivalrous gallantry and a naïve humour which makes his conversation extremely pleasant for those whose ears are not all too delicate.

That domestic circumstances are very free, in a manner of speaking unimportant, is quite understandable in a country where three quarters of the population, man, woman and child, spend their day beneath a strange roof (in factory rooms) or criss-cross the land trading – and arising from what was just said, that the stronghold of dreams and fairy tales, characteristic customs and practices is not to be found here. For, although legend has peopled many a ravine and uncanny cave with mountain spirits and the ghosts of victims of murder or of those who starved to death in the labyrinths, every child laughs at it and only the less brave or more imaginative traveller is startled when an owl hoots at him in the black gully or water drips cold from the stalactites on to his neck. In short, the son of industry possesses only the mountain dweller's iron constitution, bodily strength and determination, but without the romantic touch and the imagination usually engendered by splendid surroundings. He loves his country, without sensing its character; he loves his hills, because they provide iron and fresh air, his rocks because they deliver superb material and distant views, his roaring waterfalls because they make the factory wheels revolve more rapidly and finally, the whole, precisely because it is his homeland and in its atmosphere he feels most comfortable. His festivities are, depending on the host's circumstances, copied from the urban ones as far as possible, as are his traditional costumes. Everything as elsewhere, dusty highways cluttered with freight carts and one-horse carriages – hostelrys with waiters and printed menu-sheets. Individual villages in the depths of the mountains are still straw-thatched and dilapidated enough, most, however, pleasant like all factory locations, preserved only by black slate cladding and rooves weighted with stone slabs that have to be put up against the rough climate; a feeble air of rusticity and only the charcoal burners in the woods, the pale hammersmiths in front of their infernal fires and the miners in leathern aprons pushing their trolleys full of flashing lead ore in and out of the adits, lend the landscape an appropriate façade here and there.

It is different in the archbishopric of Paderborn where man brings a sort of wild poetry to the otherwise sober environment and would transport us to the Abruzzas if we had enough imagination to take that thunder cloud for a mighty mountain range, that quarry for a cliff. Of no great build, lean and sinewy, with sharp, wily features prematurely deeply brown weathered and furrowed by toil and passion, the Paderborner lacks only the coal-black hair for a decidedly southern appearance. The men are often handsome and always picturesque, the women share the fate of southern women, an early, well-developed flush of youth and an early, gipsy-like old age. Nowhere are there such smoky villages, such little shanties with roof windows as here, where an impetuous temperament leads a large part of the population into precipitate marriages, with no capital other than four arms and a dozen balks of timber caded and scraped together, out of which a sort of pigsty is put together, just big enough to take the stove, the marriage bed and if need be, a boxlike

room bearing the proud name of parlour – but in fact, only an extraordinarily wide and high box with one or two window holes. If the young couple has diligence and stamina, then a few sheds may be carpentered on bit by bit. If they have uncommon diligence and luck at the same time, then a modest dwelling for human beings might finally come into being. Frequently, however, poverty and indolence do not let it get that far and we, ourselves, saw a man of advanced years, whose room was too short to sleep stretched out in it, his legs reaching a goodly length into the street. Even the coarsest is artful and clever at everything but seldom knows how to extract lasting advantage, since he often exhausts his talent in little acts of cunning, the proceeds of which he immediately squanders and lets himself be influenced by hedge-lawyers who contrive a lawsuit over any and every fencepost, which bleeds him white, almost always ends in distraint upon his goods and frequently loses him house and home. Dire extremity drives him to great efforts, but only until the most urgent need is satisfied. Every last farthing that the Muensterlander would carefully put by, the Sauerlander invests in some business or other, is immediately handed over to innkeepers and dealers by this child of penury and the bars are filled mostly with the blissful who take a couple of days off, afterwards to go on starving in the same old way and take on casual labouring again. In a fertile land and equipped with all the natural gifts which otherwise advance one in the world, many, unfortunately, live out their youth in poverty and end in miserable old age reduced to beggary. Inclined to superstition in his demoralisation, the unfortunate believes himself to be very pious, the while submitting his conscience to most unwarrantable stretching. In reality, some obligations also stand too much in the way of his views, held since birth, of his own rights, that he should ever understand them. That against the landowner, for example, whom, in accordance with his natural rights, he willingly regards as an arch enemy or usurper of the soil that actually belongs to him; one whom a genuine country boy ought, for the sake of a good cause, to flatter and for the rest, damage, wherever he can. The forestry and hunting laws seem to him even more outrageous, since “our Lord God lets the timber grow of its own accord and the game crosses from one country into another.” The transgressor, with this slogan on his lips, believes himself to be fully entitled to blind every forester with snuff who surprises him *in flagranti* and as far he can, to get the better of him. The landowners are, therefore, forced into an exhausting waste of gamekeepers who patrol all day long and many a night, yet still cannot always prevent the most massive infringement of forestry laws, for example, the felling in one night of whole stretches of woodland. Here the very honourable clergy’s endeavours are frustrated and even denial of absolution in the confessional loses its force, as with the Corsicans when a vendetta prevails. Even thirty years ago it was something quite ordinary to meet long columns of carts by moonlight, alongside which thirty to forty men would be trotting, axes shouldered, expressions of wary resoluteness on their sunburned features and the next day, for sure, brought tales of of a bloody fight or an overwhelmingly audacious infringement of the forestry laws, depending on whether they had met the forest rangers or successfully evaded them. The Prussian government’s surveillance has, however, decreed an end for this open secret, but without significant concrete results, since the offenders now make up by stratagem what they lose in power. Also it is, unfortunately, a fact that those needing wood, even government officials, so quietly take their supplies from people to whom not one splinter rightly belongs, in the same way as seaside dwellers everywhere are used to getting their coffee and sugar from smugglers. That this line of business appeals so much to the character of the unpropertied that he cannot neglect it, even when the distance of several hours from the border makes it irksome, dangerous and little worthwhile at the same time, may well be assumed,

and almost right in the heart of the interior we see, on an evening stroll, little gangs in fives and sixes hastily plodding past us, without salutation, toward the Weser region and can see them at daybreak, dripping with sweat, and not seldom with a bandaged head or arm, slipping back into their huts with little bundles. Occasionally the revenue men follow them for hours. The villages of the interior are startled by nightly shots and wild shouts. Next morning tracks through the cornfield show in which direction the smugglers had fled; flattened areas where they came to grips with the revenue men and a half-dozen day labourers report sick to their masters. The marriages, entered into mostly out of hot-headedness and with complete disregard for outward advantages, would elsewhere be seen as exceedingly unhappy, as scarcely one woman hut-dweller lives out her life without having made the acquaintance of the so-called switch or stick. They, however, see it as "rustic, moral" and live in the conviction that a good marriage, like a good fabric, at first needs breaking in, in order later to provide good homespun linen. If we wanted to make a summary of the lower classes of the populace by the three main races of Westphalia, then we would say: the Sauerlander courts like a merchant, namely in accordance with money and ability and conducts his marriage in the same way, coolly and adjusted to joint earning. The Muensterlander courts like a Moravian, in conformity with good reputation and the will of his parents and loves and supports his marriage like a prize fallen from the hand of God, in peaceful performance of duty. But the wild Paderborn stock, if upbringing and breeding have done nothing for him, woos like an uncouth child of nature with all the impetuosity of his passionate blood. Thus it often comes to violent scenes with his parents and those of his wife. He enlists in the army or runs the danger of going to the dogs, if his affections remain unreciprocated. Marriage in these shabby hovels becomes true purgatory for the women, until they see their way. Cursing and swearing have, as among sailors, lost a great part of their meaning and let a rough kind of self-sacrificing love exist alongside. There is much complaining about the depravity of the serving class: any relationship, however fleeting, between the two sexes has to be strictly supervised by those who would keep their house clear of scandal and wish to keep their female servants in a condition of fitness for service. Even the lower supervisors, people of mature age and otherwise strict enough, seemed deaf and blind as soon as, not an engagement, but just the thought of a serious intention presented itself – "those two are courting" – and thus all barriers were down, although scarcely one marriage emerged from twenty such courtings and the consequences therefrom fell to the parishes. Here, brandy 'plague' also claims not a few victims and the effect of excess is that much more fierce and dangerous with this impetuous natured people. This demoralisation is the more to be deplored, since the least among them is not without talent and mental powers and his cunning adroitness, his courage, his deep unruly passions and, above all, his nationality combined with the distinct exterior, do make him a worthy object of attention. There are few old customs at festivities and they are seldom applied, because the Paderborner is too averse to any constraint to let anything that smacks of ceremonial spoil his pleasure. At weddings, for example, nothing special happens, the well-known handing over of keys and bread takes also place here, that is to say, where there is something, other than an old chest, which would require a key. After that, everybody attends to his merry-making with dancing and the bottle until all line up for the *Papen von Istrup*, a favourite national dance, a confused whirling and intertwining which does not begin until lighting up and indicates to the "Traveller in Ethnology and Geography" that it might be more advisable to remove himself, as from now on, the excitement of the guests rises to a height the culminating point of which is not to be calculated in advance.

If the bride is a genuine “unfledged bride”, one with garland and streaming hair, then she takes the floor, proud as a princess and this glorious family event is sure to become the glory of her offspring who indeed know how to boast about how magnificently she strolled in with spangles and tinsel in her hair. Preferable to a wedding, to the Paderborner, is Shrovetide during the first days of which (Quinquagesima Sunday) a lad will turn up, bearing a feathered cockerel made of bread dough on a golden apple, that he presents to his beloved, or even to the titled lady, especially if he is lacking money for a rainy day. On the Monday, the merry-making is at its height. Even beggars, who have nothing else, hang their patched bedsheet over their heads and tie a sheet of paper with holes in it over their faces and, reeling along the walls with their eyes flashing out of the white framing and the long nose beaks, they make an even more ghastly impression than the actual masked processions which, in horrid disguise, gallop across the fields on farm horses, howling and hurraing, every hundred paces leaving behind a *rider-of-the sand* who furiously bawls after them or groans back into the village like a limping monster. The marksmen’s meeting is also very popular, partly for the sake of the irony, since on this day the poacher is allowed to parade with a straight expression and firm hand before the very eye of authority ignoring his trade and often the worst rogue whom the forest rangers have already been persecuting for weeks, presents bouquet and sash of honour to the gracious young lady, as to his queen, and goes through the ceremony of the first dance with her. That is followed the next day by the womens’ shooting, a gallant custom that one should at least visit here and which looks charming enough. At daybreak the wives of the community, among them some very young and pretty, gather in front of the big house, wearing their golden bonnets and headbands, with ribbons and posies, each shouldering her husband’s rifle. At the head, the wife of the champion marksman, sabre at the side, like the erstwhile Maria Theresa on the Kremnica ducat. Immediately behind her the girl bearing the white club flag. A halt is made at the courtyard, the queen draws the sabre, gives out commands – “right” – “left” – in short, all the military drill movements. Then the flag is waved and the shining regiment moves off to the rifle range with a loud hurrah, where each fires a couple of shots with her rifle (some with the most dainty coquetry) then to march to the inn with a jingling band, where there is no king today, but only a queen with her court who dispose over everything, the men having to bow to their every wish. The beginning of the harvest festival is in sharp contrast to the earthy customs of the country. This festival is celebrated only at noblemen’s estates and large leasehold farms in the old conventional style. The harvest wagon with the last cartload follows the band marching in front on the sheaves of which the head maid sits enthroned, above her the sparkling harvest garland on a pole; then follow all the employees, in pairs with folded hands, the men bareheaded and so they pass slowly across the field to the big house, singing the *Te Deum* a capella to the lovely old tune of the Catholic rite, but relieved by the wind instruments at every third verse, which makes it strikingly solemn and especially with these people and in the open, something truly moving. Arrived at the house, the head maid climbs down and carries her garland with a courteous little speech to each member of the family, from the master of the house to the smallest youngster on his rocking horse. Then the garland is hung over the barndoor in place of last year’s and the festivities begin. Although not enjoying outstanding singing organs, Paderborners are yet very fond of songs. Everywhere, in the spinning-room, out in the fields, they can be heard, singing in fifths and whistling. They have their own for spinning, field and flax-threshing and brawling. The last is a bad, derisory song that they sing off the cuff, keeping time with the brawl, at every passerby. Young gentlemen in particular, who,

depending on the circumstances, qualify as suitors to their maidens cannot expect to get past without being mocked and having to hear, crowed from twenty to thirty throats, "Hey! Hey! He's too fat for her, he'll have no luck", or "He is too poor, God have mercy! The bird it did sing, that sissy, that swank, the year it is long, ho! ho! ho! – let him go"! Generally speaking, where it promises an occasion for a quarrel, they so much like to boast of their power, as if it were made of gold; they side with it as well as the best in more serious cases now and then, for the same reason and here, as with the Paris police, it is nothing unusual to come across the worst "poachers" after a few years as forest assistants for whom it is thereupon a great amusement to brawl with old comrades and set new tricks against the old ones. Only recently, a dozen such practioners caught their bosom friend, the village schoolmaster, who earlier taught them the tactics of "looking for wood", as he was just about to train the third or fourth batch of recruits, namely some eighty barefooted rascals who, as young wolves start by sucking out the blood from the prey, skilfully wrought havoc in the new growth with their billhooks while the tutor gave down orders from a broad beech.

We have already mentioned folk superstition. This expresses itself in (apart from fear of ghosts and belief in witches) preferably by sympathetic means and the so-called spell-casting, an act which gives some pause for thought and the really unusual successes thereof are in no way to be brushed aside by mere denial. We ourselves must admit to having been witnesses to unexpected results. On the fields around which the Whisperer with his white wand had walked and upon which he had thrown the clod from a leased arable field, not one sparrow, not one worm dared venture; no mildew formed and it is surprising to see this stretch displaying a crop with heavy, drooping ears, between broad areas of empty straw. Furthermore, a splendid white horse, an Arab thoroughbred and exceedingly fiery, spurred to an immoderate jump, fell and bit its tongue almost through at the root. As the angry animal's lashing out during the first few days made it impossible to get at the wound, gangrene began to set in and a very competent veterinary surgeon declared the beautiful horse to be beyond saving. Now recourse was had to the 'miracle cure', not a medication as one will probably think, but a secret practice, unknown to me until then, for the purpose of which nothing more than a cloth bespattered with the animal's blood was sent to the Whisperer who lived several hours distant. One may imagine what confidence I had in this treatment! On the next day, however, the animal became so quiet that I saw this as a sign of its impending decease. On the following day it arose, bit and swallowed, albeit somewhat laboriously, a few slices of bread without crust. On the third morning we saw, to our astonishment, that it had tackled the fodder in the rack and had already consumed part of same, while only its gingerly selecting of the softer haulms and a slight twitching around lips and nostrils denoted the sensitivity of the completely closed wound, as we had to convince ourselves by the examination, and since then I have sometimes seen the beautiful Arab steed fresh and fiery as before, prancing through the field with its rider. Suchlike and similar occur daily and in this connection the proximity of the Whisperer or his medium to the object which is to be cured by magic is always so slight (in some cases, like that just mentioned, it is omitted altogether) that an explanation through essences working naturally can have no place here, in the same way that the much discussed power of imagination with animals, plants and even rocks has to be discarded and the explainer is left with only the power of human belief, the magnetic power of a firm will over Nature, as the ultimate expedient. We have the following incident from the mouth of a credible eye-witness: in the garden of a large estate, the green cabbage-caterpillar had got out of hand to such an extent that the owner, although Protestant, in his disgust, finally sent for the Whisperer. The latter

forthwith appeared, paced around the vegetable fields, quietly murmuring to himself, touching a head of cabbage here and there with a wand. Now, immediately adjacent to the garden was a stable building on the defective roof of which some workmen were patching, who had fun disturbing the magician by scoffing and throwing down bits of chalky mortar. After he had repeatedly asked them not to annoy him, he said, at last, "If you do not keep quiet, I shall drive the caterpillars up on to the roof at you", and as the teasing still did not stop, he went to the nearest hedge, cut a quantity of finger-length sticks, placed them horizontally to the wall of the stable and went away. All the caterpillars forthwith left their plants, crept in wide, green columns across the sand paths, up the wall on the little sticks and after half an hour the workmen had retreated and were standing in the courtyard, crawling alive with vermin and pointing to the roof which was covered in a green, wriggling blanket. We are not giving this tale in any way as something special, since the explanation touched on above could at the outset be held as due to essences acting upon the sense of smell, but rather as a little genre-picture taken from the ways and doings of an imaginative folk just discussed. At that time, big landowners had the right of jurisdiction at the lower levels and this was wielded strictly, the subordinate excusing himself with the severity of the master, the master with the malevolence of the subordinates, as things went, and the evil was continually aggravated in this interaction. Once, the headman (estate steward) of a village was to be removed from office because his cheating and stealing had become too grievous. He had enlisted some people, others he had oppressed and the community was split into two bitter parties. An insidious silence in the village had been noticed for several days and as, on the court-day, the landowner, by reason of being unwell, authorised his estate manager to settle the matter in collaboration with the actual judiciary, this alteration was in no way pleasant for the two gentlemen, as they well knew that peasants, while hating their master, despised every townsman, and "quill-drivers" in particular, from the very depths of their souls.

Their apprehension was not diminished when, a few hours before the hearing, a swarm of barefoot women crowded into the courtyard, real fishwives, hair flying and children in arms, and started to crow, like a nest of young devils, "We are in revolt! We protest! We want to keep the manager! Our men are in the fields, mowing and have sent us, we are revolting!"

The landowner stepped to the window and called out, "Women! Take yourselves off, the bailiff (judiciary) is not here yet". Whereupon the swarm gradually dispersed, calling out and swearing. When, after a few hours, the hearing had begun and the examinations already held were read out, a muffled murmuring of many voices arose beneath the windows of the courthouse and grew in volume. Then a couple of rawboned men forced their way into the courtroom – then others, too - in a short while it was overfull to the point of suffocation. The bailiff, used to such scenes, ordered them, in a stern voice, to go outside. They obeyed, really, but, as he well saw, lined themselves up at the door. At the same time he noticed that some, with wrathful glances at the opposing party, lifted their smocks and let short heavy cudgels become visible, which was reciprocated by the other side in similar pantomime. Nevertheless, he read out the verdict with a fair degree of composure and proceeded then, tugging his associates by their cloaks, hastily toward the door. There, however, those standing outside forced their way in and let fly with their cudgels and – to be brief – solemn justice had to be glad to make use of the proximity of a window for a somewhat irregular retreat. The state of affairs had, meanwhile, already become clear to the landowner through the tumult's gradually moving out and he had the rifle club mobilised, nothing but relatives of the interested parties, who were

also pleased at this opportunity to make themselves felt for a change. They had just marched up when the alarm bell sounded. A few marksmen ran post-haste to the tower where they found an old woman who, pulling the rope with all her might, was immediately grabbed and dispatched via roundabout ways to the quod. Meanwhile, the landowner was standing at the window and observing through his telescope, the paths which led to the most notorious villages and soon he saw them, thronging down like Bedouin hordes from every hill – he could clearly make out the cudgels in their hands and see by their gestures, as they shouted and waved to each other. Without thinking twice, he cast a glance at the weather vane on the chateau tower and after he had satisfied himself that the air was not carrying the noise up to the point where those approaching could have reached in about a quarter of an hour, a few reliable people were hastily readied, in shirt sleeves and with scythe and rake like workers going into the field, and had to amble toward the various troops and tell them that the pealing in the village was meant for a burning chimney that had already been extinguished. The trick worked, they all toddled home cursing, while inside, the rifle club also did its best with fist and butt and thus the whole scandal ended with a few seriously wounded and a dozen shoved into the clink. Two thirds of the community, however, looked as though they were afflicted with plague boils and displayed particular ponderousness in their movements all week long. Similar scenes were formerly as common as daily bread. Even today, despite the constraint of years, the common man has inwardly not shifted one hairsbreadth away from his desires and attitudes. He may well be kept down, but will go on smouldering underneath the ash. Raised affluence would alleviate much, if only there were not the carelessness and the passion that bring about an indigent population in the first place, whose trifling property becomes prey to innkeepers and hedge-lawyers. One cannot but feel sympathy for a people which, gifted with strength, perspicacity and in possession of a blessed land, is become victim, in so many of its members, to the saddest circumstances.

Seldom may a few miles bring about such a rapid transition as that which the border districts of Paderborn and its pious neighbouring country, the bishopric of Muenster, form. Only an hour ago, over the next hill, little dark-haired, brown-skinned brats in a semi-natural state, not so much watching over their few skinny goats as standing guard over them against thieves, had, upon your asking the way, first mocked you by feigned misunderstanding and chaffing and then unerringly told you the path, where you became stuck like a toad in the swamp or Abraham's ram in the thorns – that is to say, if you did not jingle your money, for in this case, not only one, but all the boys drove their goats into the cornfield so that they could be more sure of finding them and broke at least a dozen fences and tore out posts, in order to clear the nearest way for you and you, like it or not, had to decide on a four-fold settlement. And now you, like an American who has just escaped the wigwams of the Iroquois and steps into the first stockades of a Moravian colony, stand there facing a couple of flaxen-haired children, wearing at least four camisoles, night-caps, woollen stockings and the wooden shoes customary in these parts, who timidly hold their single cow by a rope and yell out in alarm if it snaps at an ear of corn. Their features upon whose milky-white skin the sun can scarcely have had any effect, bear so openly the expression of the most good-natured innocence that you decide upon a repeated question. "Sir," says the boy and extends you a hand-kiss, "That place I know not". You turn to his neighbour who answers not at all, but only blinks at you as though he thought that you would strike him. "Sir," the former taking up the word again, "He, too, does not know it". Vexed, you trot off, but the boys have whispered

together and the big speaker comes clattering after you. "Does the gentleman perhaps mean ..."? (here he names the name of the place in local dialect). Upon your affirming it, he tramps pluckily along ahead of you, always looking back at his comrades who cover his back with their eyes, up to the next cross roads, then, hastily designating a direction with his hand, skips away as fast as one can gallop in wooden shoes and you pocket your three-penny bit again or throw it into the sand where the little moorland scamps, watching you from a distance, will certainly not let it go to waste.

In this one stroke, you have the character of the rural populace in a nutshell. Good naturedness, timidity, a deep sense of justice and quiet order and hospitality which, despite his limited aptitude for ventures and propitious thoughts, has brought about prosperity for him, which far exceeds that of even his trading neighbour, the Sauerlander. The Muensterlander seldom marries, without having a secure income in his hand and relies upon, if this does not fall to his lot, rather the charitableness of his relatives or of his master who will not cast out an old servant. And really, there is no fairly well-to-do household without a couple of such *Bringers of good fortune* who warm their tired bones on the best place at the hearth. The illegitimate population cannot be taken into account at all, although now rather than thirty years ago, where we came across one single illegitimate child in a parish of five thousand souls – a lad of twentyfive years, whom, at the time of the Demarcation Line, a foreign sergeant had left as a sad souvenir to a poor serving maid. There are no beggars among the rural folk, neither in name nor in fact, but only a few "poor men, poor women" in every community, who are fed by turns in the well-to-do houses, where the most negligent mother would punish her child if it passed by the "poor man" without giving him the time of day. Thus there is space, subsistence and peace for all and the government would like to encourage a greater population, which would certainly have unhappy consequences among a people which knows how to manage a property sensibly, but which entirely lacks the ability and energy for making a living with its bare hands and the adage, "Necessity is the mother of invention" (respectively, to work) would hardly properly hold good here, where the mild, damp air makes a man dreamy and his shyness is partly physical, so that one has only to look at him almost to sympathise with the slow circulating of his blood.

The Muensterlander is tall, fleshy, seldom of strong muscle power, his features are soft, often extremely charming and always winning because of an expression of amicability, but not easily interesting, as even an old man often looks more womanly than a Paderborn woman in middle age. The light hair colour is definitely predominant. One meets old flax-haired persons who have not turned grey on account of blondness. This and everything associated with it, the skin teint, dazzlingly white and rosy and resisting the sun's rays well into over-ripe old age, the light blue eyes without any substantial expression, the fine face with an almost comically small mouth, combined with an often very winsome and benevolent smile and quick to redden, these place the beauty of both sexes on a very unequal pair of scales. There is scarcely a man whom one could name as really handsome, while among twenty girls at least fifteen turn out as pretty and indeed in that somewhat insipid but still delightful taste of an English etching.

Female traditional dress is more a display of wealth than fashionable. No end of fabric skirts with thick folds, really heavy gold bonnets and silver crosses on a black velvet band and among the married women, frontlets of the widest possible lace designate here the degree of affluence, as seldom anyone goes into the shop without clutching the necessary silver dollar and more seldom that the right proportion between clothing and uncut linen and other household treasures is disturbed by dressiness. The household in the farmsteads which lie mostly well apart, is large

and in every regard substantial, yet thoroughly rustic. The long building of brick, with its low-reaching roof and bisected by the threshing floor on both sides of which a long row of horned cattle of Friesian pedigree clanks with its chains – the large kitchen light and clean, with a huge fireplace beneath which the house personnel can hide – the great deal of shiny pots and pans on display and the stocks of flax deliberately stacked up on the walls likewise remind one of Holland which this province, as far as wealth and life style are concerned, significantly approaches, although isolation and a functioning completely restricted to internal commerce have kept its population as free from all the moral influences that trading nations cannot avoid, as scarce another district. Whether sharp brushes with the outside world could give the Muensterlander the courage and the bustle of the Batavian – a patriarchal life give the latter the simplicity of custom and kindness of the Muensterlander – we must leave undecided, but doubt it. Now at least they are, in the characteristics that one always attributes as the most national, to both, almost hostilely opposed and despise one another mutually as befits neighbours. We already spoke once about the exceedingly peaceful impressions of a Muensterland farmstead. In the summer months, where the cattle are in the field, you hear no sound apart from the barking of a yard-dog fidgetting on its chain and, if you step close to the open door, the quiet chirping of chicks slipping in and out of the wall-nettles and the measured pendulum swing of the clock with the weights of which a couple of kittens are playing. The women weeding in the garden are sitting so quietly crouched that you do not realise that they are there, if a casual glance over the hedgerow does not betray them to you. And the beautiful, melancholy folk tunes in which this district is more than rich, you will perhaps hear only on a nightly stroll through the whirring of the spinning wheels, when the silly girls believe themselves to be safe from every ear. Out in the fields, too, you can dream on in a feeling of deepest solitude, until a chance clearing of a throat or the snorting of a horse reveals to you that the shadow into which you are just stepping, is cast by a half-loaded harvest cart and you are in the midst of twenty workmen who are not greatly surprised that the “meditating gentleman” did not take any notice of their hat-raising, as he is, in their opinion, “absorbed”, that is to say, reciting the rosary from memory.

This tranquillity and this monotony, which emanate from within, also extend across all circumstances in life. The dead are mourned only moderately but never forgotten and the eyes of old people still fill with tears when they speak of their deceased parents. Previous affections only seldom play any part in contracting marriages. Relatives and respectable friends recommend their favourites to one another and, as a rule, the advocacy of the person held in highest esteem settles the matter. Thus it happens that many a married couple had hardly seen each other before marriage, while, under the French government, the ridiculous case occurred not seldom, in which fiancés who had tramped miles in order to obtain the necessary certificates for their brides, were unable to state either forename or family name of those whom they intended to marry a week later and were highly surprised that the designation ‘maid’ or ‘niece’ of some esteemed member of the community was not accepted as adequate. That under these circumstances the greatest possible number of proposals is more honourable and crucial for the reputation than elsewhere is understandable and we have, ourselves, attended the wedding of a true gem of an engaged couple, where the bridegroom had chosen from among twenty-eight, the bride from among thirty-two. Despite preceding negotiations, even the most splendid man is, however, not sure of his success, since integrity forbids definite acceptance; now begins the task of the official suitor. One afternoon he will enter the house of the girl

whom he is courting, always on the excuse or pretence of wanting to light his pipe. The housewife will offer him a chair and stoke up the embers, without a word. Then she will open a nonchalant conversation about the weather, the grain harvest etc. the while taking down a pan from the mantelpiece, that she carefully scours and hangs above the coals. The decisive point is now reached. If the suitor sees preparations for a pancake, then he will take out his weighty silver watch and claim that he can no longer stay. If, however, chips of fatty bacon and eggs are put into the pan, then he will boldly come out with his proposition. The young people "plight their troth", actually by exchanging a few old medallions and the business is complete.

A few days before the wedding, the invitor makes his rounds with a long drawn out speech, often miles and miles, because here, as with the Scots, blood relatives to the farthest removed member and down to the poorest, are held in high esteem. After these, the so-called neighbours must not be passed over, three or four families in effect, who dwell perhaps a half mile distant, but are recorded as "neighbours" in very ancient parish records and, like princes of the blood maintaining their rights and obligations against collateral relatives, thus safeguard their rights and obligations against those neighbours living closer but perhaps for only a few centuries. The "Gifts Eve" takes place on the day before the wedding, a friendly custom to help the young beginners over the most difficult time. Of an evening, when it is dusk is already falling, one maid after another will enter the house, saying, "Greetings from our lady of the house", set down a basket, covered by a white cloth, and immediately depart. This basket will contain the gift; eggs, butter, poultry, ham – all according to the abilities of each donor – and the presents, if the engaged couple is without means, are often so abundant that, that they will not need to worry about the next winter's stores.

A kindly, deeply felt courtesy characterising the people forbids delivery of the gift by a member of the family. Whoever has no maid sends someone else's child. On the morning of the wedding, at about eight, the bride climbs aboard the cart decorated with a white flag glittering with gold, which contains her dowry. She sits alone among her treasures, dressed in her best finery but without any special mark of distinction, weeping bitterly. The bridesmaids and female neighbours grouped on the following cart also observe a serious, bashful attitude, while the young fellows toddling alongside on fat farmhorses try to express their jolliness by waving hats and raising an awkward hurrah here and there and occasionally letting off blanks from an old rifle.

The bridegroom with his followers first appears before the parish church, does not, however, board the bride's cart after the marriage ceremony, but trots alongside as a single pedestrian right up to the door of his house, where the young wife is received by the mother-in-law and led ceremoniously across the threshold with a "God bless thy going out and thy coming in". If the mother is no longer alive, then the parish priest takes her place or, if he is present by chance, the estate owner, which is held to be a good omen ensuring for the newly weds and their offspring the undisturbed benefit of the farm, in accordance with the old adage, "whom the gentry bid come, they do not dismiss".⁵ During this ceremony the bridegroom slips into his room and soon after appears, dressed in bodice, mobcap and apron. In this get-up he must serve the guests on his day of glory, even taking no part in the wedding feast, but stands with the plate under his arm, behind the bride who, for her part lifts not a finger and allows herself to be served like a princess. After the meal, old dances begin, handed down through generations; "*Half Moon*", "*Cobblers Dance*", "*At the back, in the garden*", some with the most graceful, intricate movements. The orchestra consists of one or two violins and a worn out bass fiddle bowed 'by-ear' by the swineherd or horse groom. If the assembly is very fond of music, then a couple of pot lids are brought

into use, too and a winnowing sieve which is scratched, with a wood chip against the grain, with might and main by guests in turns.

Add to this the bellowing and chain-clinking of the cattle stamping, frightened, in their stalls, one will agree that the unshakeable gravity of the dancers is at least not attributable to lack of exciting noise. Here and there a young lad lets out a hurrah which sounds as solitary as an owl hoot on a stormy night. Beer is drunk moderately, brandy even more moderately, but scalding hot coffee "for cooling down" in great rivers and at least seven shiny pewter kettles are constantly on the move. Between dances, the bride disappears from time to time and returns each time in another costume, as many of them as she has at her command, starting from full wedding dress up to the ordinary Sunday finery in which she still looks handsome enough, in damask bonnet with its broad golden galloon, the heavy silk neckerchief and a bustle as imposing as only at least four woollen skirts, worn one over the other, can produce. As soon as the clock on the kitchen wall has struck midnight, one sees the women rising from their benches and whispering among themselves. At the same time the young people gather together closely, taking the bride into their midst and beginning an extremely artistic spiral dance the purpose of which is to maintain, in a rapidly swarming jumble, a fourfold wall around the bride, for now comes the struggle between marriage and virginity.

As soon as the women advance, the dance becomes more lively, the gyrations more coloured, the women try to force their way into the circle from all sides, the bachelors try to shove them away with couples pushed in front; the parties become heated, the music whirls ever faster, ever closer draw the spiral lines, arms and knees are brought into play, lads glowing like stoves, matriachal matrons running with sweat and there have been examples where the sun has risen over the undecided battle.

At last, one veteran lady, who in her time has dragged a few score of brides into wedlock, has grabbed her booty. Suddenly the music falls silent, the circle scatters apart and all stream after the victorious women and the weeping bride whose clothes are changed for the last time and is symbolically divorced from her maidenhood by donning the womanly headband. This is a service of honour which is the privilege of the (so-called) neighbour women, but in which, every married woman present joins, the spouse of the estate owner not excepted, by performing some little service, handing a pin or a ribbon. Then the bride appears once more in clean house dress and shirtsleeves, as it were, a defeated Brunhilde from now on willing to serve, but nevertheless reaches for her husband's hat and puts it on. The women do the same and, of course, each the hat of her own husband, that he hands to her deferentially. Then a stately women's minuet completes the ceremony and at the same time indicates a portent of an honourable, hard-working, peaceful wedlock, in which the woman, however, never forgets that she wore her husband's hat on the wedding day. There remains yet an unusual task for the guests, before they go their separate ways. The bridegroom, namely, has become invisible during the minuet; he has hidden himself ostensibly out of fear of from the behatted bride and the whole house is turned over in seeking him. They look in and under the beds, rustle about in the straw and hay, even rummage through the garden until someone finally discovers, in a corner full of old lumber, the tassel of his mobcap or a mere corner of the kitchen apron, whereupon he is immediately grabbed and dragged to the bridal chamber, with the same force, but much less decorum than his beautiful other half.

The Muensterlander is altogether very superstitious, though his superstition is as harmless as he himself. He knows nothing of magic arts, little of witches and evil spirits, although he greatly fears the devil, while yet believing that the latter finds little occasion to move around Muensterland. The frequent ghosts in marsh, heath and forest are poor

souls out of Purgatory, who are daily remembered in the telling of a thousand rosaries and, without doubt, with advantage, as people think that they notice that the "Sunday spinstress" ever more seldom reaches out of the bush with her bloodied arms, the "thieving peat-cutter" no longer moans half as plaintively in the marsh and the "headless fiddler" seems wholly to have abandoned his seat on the woodland path.

Little extraordinary happens at burials, other than that the death of the householder has to be announced to his bees, wherefore, as soon as the dying man has breathed his last, the most composed person among those present goes to the apiary, knocks on each hive and audibly says, "Greetings from the lady of the house; the master is dead", whereupon the bees resign themselves to their sorrow like good Christians and apply themselves to their business as usual. The vigil which is held in silence and prayer, is a duty falling to those distant neighbours, as much as the meal at the wake is their right and they ensure, too, that the deceased receives a really fine shroud, a good lot of black bows and a scintillating wreath and a bouquet of silken ribbons, tinsel and artificial flowers, as he will unfailingly appear in the same attire on the Day of Judgement, where they then have to share praise and blame with the bereaved.

They think somewhat unclearly about ghosts haunting chateaux and large farmhouses, but also not ill of them and believe that, on their complete disappearance, the owner's family would die out or become impoverished. These ghosts possess neither the domestic skills nor the malice of other hobgoblins, but of a solitary, more musing nature, pacing, at twilight, as though deep in thought, slowly and silently past some late returning milkmaid or a child and are, without doubt, genuine Muensterlanders, since there is no case of their having damaged or deliberately frightened anybody. One differentiates between "Pot-hats" and "Tall-hats". The former, little wrinkled manikins in old fashioned costume, with hoary beards and little three-cornered hats – the others supernaturally tall and lean, with long slouch hats, but both are benevolent, just that the Pot-hat brings certain blessings, the Tall-hat by contrast, seeking only to prevent misfortune. At times they take their philosophical strolls only in the surroundings, the avenues of the chateau, in the woodland and meadowland of the farmstead. Ordinarily, they have, apart from that, possession of a store or a desolate attic chamber where they can occasionally be heard at night, walking to and fro or a creaking latch, slowly turning, can be heard. At conflagrations they have been seen earnestly walking out of the flames and turning into a country lane, never to return, and it was a hundred-to-one bet that the family, in rebuilding, would fall into difficulty and debts.

The so-called "foreseeing" deserves closer attention than this – a capacity for presentiment heightened to seeing, or at least hearing, quite similar to the Highland Scots' "second sight" and so common here that, although the gift is held to be highly unfortunate and to be kept secret, one comes across people notoriously afflicted with it, everywhere, and fundamentally almost no native may claim to be completely free of it. The clairvoyant of higher degree is also outwardly recognisable by his light blond hair, the ghostly flashing of his watery-blue eyes and a pale or over delicate facial colouring. For the rest, he is mostly healthy and, in normal life, often dull and not given to the slightest trace of exaggeration.

He can be overcome by his gift at any time of day, but most often on full-moon nights when he suddenly awakes and is driven by feverish unrest out into the open or to the window. This urge is so strong that scarcely anyone can restrain him, although everybody knows that the malady becomes heightened to the unbearable, to complete loss of nighttime peace, through yielding to him. By contrast, persistent resistance makes it gradually diminish and finally quite disappear.

The clairvoyant sees funeral processions – long army columns and battles – he clearly sees the powder smoke and the movements of the fighting men, exactly describes their strange uniforms and weapons, even hears words in a foreign language, that he reproduces in mutilated form and which will actually not be spoken on that very spot, until long after his death.

The clairvoyant also has to see insignificant occurrences with the same uneasiness. For example, a harvest wagon which, perhaps twenty years later, will tip over in this farmstead. He describes exactly the appearance and clothing of the servants, not yet born, who seek to right it, the distinctive markings of foal or calf which, startled, jumps sideways and falls into a loam pit that does not yet exist, etc. Napoleon was still brooding over his cramped destiny in the military academy at Brienne when those folk already talked of “silver horsemen”, with “silver globes on their heads, from which long black horse tails” flapped and of a strangely attired rabble flying across hedge and fence on “horses like cats” (a common expression for small, shaggy steeds) carrying in their hands a long pole with an iron spike on top.

One estate owner long dead, has recorded many of these stories and it is highly interesting to compare them with many a later, appropriate event. He who is less gifted and has not risen to clairvoyancy, “hears”. He hears the hollow hammering on the coffin lid and the rumbling of the hearse, hears the clash of arms, the beat of the drums, the clatter of horses hooves and the measured tramp of the marching columns.

He hears the cries of the wounded and the pounding, on door or window shutter, of the man who will beg succour of him or his successor. One not thus gifted will stand next the foreseer and suspect nothing, while the horses in the stable fearfully snort and kick out and the dog, pitifully howling, will creep, his tail tucked in, between his master’s legs.

It is said that the gift can, however, be passed to others; if a bystander looks over the foreseer’s left shoulder, he does not notice anything this time, but from then on has to keep the nightly watch for the other. We tell this almost reluctantly, since this addendum puts a stamp of the ridiculous on an undeniable and most remarkable phenomenon.

Previously we called the Muensterlander fearful – yet he bears the dealings with the psychical world, just mentioned, with much calmness, in the way that everywhere his fearfulness does not include passive circumstances. Completely unwilling to take part in illegal practices, none can match him for courage, yea stubbornness of endurance of that which seems right to him, and a clever man once compared these people with the Hindus who, when their religious and civil rights were to be curtailed, gathered in their thousands and, squatting on the ground, with covered heads, steadfastly awaited death by starvation. This comparison has occasionally proved itself to be very much to the point.

Under the French government, where parents and, after these had been plundered for all their goods, siblings also had to suffer for those who had made themselves unavailable for military duty, all branches of a family let themselves be requisitioned down to the very last farthing, and then pawn the last shirt, without consideration of their under-age children, without ever thinking of uttering with one word, the wish that the man or boy in hiding should creep out from behind his wallboards or hayrick. War service was so hated by, yea dreadful for everybody in those days that many sought to avoid it by voluntary mutilation, for example chopping off a finger. It was thus often the case that one brother would stand in for the other, if he thought that the latter would succumb to the hardships, but that he himself would come out of it with his life.

In short, the Muensterlander possesses a courage born of love and an enthusiastic religiosity hidden beneath an air of patient self-possession, just as he makes up for what he lacks in keen intellect by qualities of the heart, and the stranger departs, with sympathy, from a people who may

perhaps have bored him at times, the domestic virtues of whom, however, always command his respect and have often deeply moved him. Must we also add that everything said so far applies only to the rural folk? – I think, “no”. Townspeople are the same all over, in small towns as in large towns. Or, that all these circumstances are in the process of disappearing and after forty years perhaps little of it might any longer be encountered? Also “no” – sadly, it is happening the same everywhere!

Notes:

First published 1845.

¹ *Kamp* – a special form of strip cultivation enclosed by earthen embankments

² “Halter, grass, stone and grief” (*Stein, Gras und Grein*): reference to mediaeval rural courts

³ Castle near Wehrden on the Weser, called ‘Turk’s Ruin’ since 1689 after its owner cavalry sergeant major Hans von Barretig who fought the Turks

⁴ C H Spies (1755-1799) an author of romantic novels

⁵ “whom the gentry bid come, they do not dismiss” (*Wen die Herrschaft einleitet, den leitet sie nicht wieder aus*): a colloquial saying