

I started to write their story back in 1977, and I have altered it and completed it several times. I am writing so that the memory of them may still live and so that their dear shadows do not disappear into nothingness.

To describe them one cannot dissociate them from their chosen entourage without which their lives would have had no meaning. Their personalities were so remarkable, their friendship so profound that it marked their friends for ever.

In my narrative "The Prisoner's Complaint" I touched the fact that our family-life was greatly shaken by the First World War. The monarchy destroyed, everything fell to pieces. In the chaos, all our material possessions disappeared; like all other patriots we had given our gold to the fatherland, our materialistic and moral values were reduced to nothing.

When my father came back from captivity, instead of bringing us closer in a loving union, there were only deceptions, misunderstandings, complaints and quarrels.

Of course there is nothing more terrible than a war with its horrors, distress, hunger and want, the destruction of all human values.

Our poor mother was going through a most painful menopause, with acute hypertension for which there was no cure. So when papa came home, worn out, after a harassing day with his patients, he found no words of comfort nor calm to relax. In our despair my sister and I often considered running-away.

Luckily, Margarete could find peace and harmony in Professor Cizek's school. She must have been about 16 when there was an incident, which, however candid it may have been, had completely disproportionate consequences. (The least action has consequences). The son of a doctor in the neighbourhood courted her and the two were kissing when father appeared: scandal! "Leave the house immediately and never come back!" The guilty one was Fritz Oesterreicher, a nice young man who was preparing to do theater-work; but this would have been out of the question had he not been the son of a morphinomaniac.(?) Anyway, Fritz became a mediocre actor in Germany where he married Erna Albré; both were handsome, rich and charming. But that had been a shock and a humiliation for my sister and she swore to take a revenge on Society.

This was easy for her when she was admitted to the Kunstgewerbeschule (applied arts) where the boys made her understand that she was attractive. From then on she freely made use of her charms.

To make things easy she would invite her admirers home where I had to play the chaperone. Let's forget it, I suffered too much playing that hateful role; and I was to witness frivolity and free morals too early in life.

I was chained-up to the house because of mother's ailments and because I was the only person she could stand... In those days, my only consolation was my dog with which I went for long walks on waste lands. Though I suffered I never betrayed my sister.

She betrayed herself. Whilst father was away she made good use of the calm of his consulting-room to write her letters; unfortunately she forgot a few pages on father's writing-table, who, on finding them, fell from high. These passionate letters were a proof of the ultimate intimacy my sister granted to those about her. (The leading suitor was a certain Fritz Jakobi, a young multi-millionaire whose firm made cigarette-paper for all Austria). My parents were most upright people, the most honest in the world - one can imagine their unspeakable horror. There followed terrible scenes of anger.

So, to avoid being watched, she rented a studio in a charming part of the old town -in the Himmelpfortgasse - where she was completely free to do as she liked. She was eager to become independant and to earn her living. She drew models for womens' magazines, made caricatures for a communist newspaper, she had about her a little court of friends, artists, writers and journalists.

There I met the three Thavonat countesses, young ladies of great beauty, who invited us to Sachsengang, their medieval castle on the Marchfeld. The State had requisitioned all the castles but theirs. The countesses were peniless and often couldn't afford to come by bus to Vienna. Whereas their father, when he came to Vienna always went to the best hotel to keep-up his reputation of an old aristocrat, inviting his friends to succulent suppers.

There I also met Katerina, Felix Salten's daughter and Jakob Wassermann's children. The *clou* of these meetings then was Heinrich, Arthur Schnitzler's only son. This young fair-headed man read Hölderlin's poems to my sister, they lived in a poetic euphory which soon became a passionate love-affair.

And she, who had flirted and had passing sensual liaisons and loves, had, with Heinrich the only real great love of her life.

But once again Margarete was to betray herself in the same way as before: she wrote to Heinrich on father's writing-table. This time an incomprehensible thing happened. Papa immediately wrote to the famous author. What did he say? No one will ever know. He may have told him that his daughter was a hetaire, a Messalina not worthy to soil the name of a celebrity - though Schnitzler had certainly seen worse things! Anyway, the great man made his son solemnly swear to immediately break-up his liaison with my sister. Heinrich had to go to Germany where he made a modest career as an actor. The lovers were never to see each other again.

My sister was broken down. Too proud to make an exhibition of herself, her pain would burst at night when, bathed with tears, she would confide herself to me. She had lost all taste for life, she was never know such happiness again. Her sole idea was to flee from home, to leave these parents who were the cause of her unhappiness. But how? Several suitors had proposed to marry her. She decided to marry Josef Berger whom none of us knew.

A few weeks after these deplorable incidents happened the scene so often recalled. Lunch was delayed because my sister hadn't come home, she had gone to town on an errand, on my mother's demand, to see mama's corset and dress-maker. We started to eat without her because papa started his consultations after lunch. We were eating our dessert when she arrived, her arms loaded with red roses. "Sorry to be late, I have just got married". Papa told her on a severe tone that that such sacred things were not to joked about. "But it's true, look at my ring..." For a long time we thought it was just a bad joke. Then my poor father, touched to the deepest in his idealistic heart, went to lie down on the sofa and mother had to take a sedative. "But to whom? Who is your husband? Pepi Berger? No one has ever seen him!" "Pepi has gone home to break the news to his family".

Such a precipitated marriage was a scandal for a bourgeois family. The engagement should have been announced to everybody, one had to have a trousseau, silverware and porcelain, dresses and linen. It was a terrible shock for the parents.

Pepi introduced himself a little later, calm and smiling. My parents were dismayed to see he was so young, looking like a schoolboy, though he had his architect's diploma. He had already planned big housing estates.

But where could the young couple be lodged? The housing crisis was at its highest point. After thinking it over for a long time it was decided to establish them in our living-room.

As soon as Josef came to live with us in Breitensee, a new life began. The thick clouds that had darkened our lives disappeared for ever. The newly-weds were so young, so gay, so easy to live with, so in love, so full of life and fun that their presence was like a treat every day. It may not have been my sister's great love but she let herself live; and I think that Pepi had given her something particularly precious - the promise never to impede on her freedom.

My brother-in-law's personality was so engaging that my parents came to adore him. He was what he still is, straightforward, calm, objective but without wounding one's feelings. He completely ignored family dramas, scenes of violence. When mama put on her cruel expressions he would laugh thinking she was joking..

He modernized the flat which my mother had decorated according to the tastes in 1900. He had the dark walls painted off-white, replaced the paintings of no artistic value by his wife's water-colours. My poor mother struggled room by room to keep her nice furniture. However, later on, she was delighted by the clear and gay atmosphere and when one of her sisters came to visit her and burst out laughing at these "prison walls", she would promptly say that one ought to live with one's times.

To finish this long introduction which shows an aspect of the bourgeois life, I must add that long after their wedding, Pepi and Gretl went on their honeymoon which was original in that all their friends came along with them. They were eleven in the little pension on the Garda lake: themselves, Hilde and Fritz Lampl, Otto Bauer, the play-wright Carl Zuckmayer, Albert Ehrenstein,, the writer then at the height of his short-lasting fame, Fritz Hohenberg with her little Susi and the two architects by the name of Breuer.

## SEVEN HAPPY YEARS

I was soon to become acquainted with the Lampls. My sister told me they were marvellous people. They had their "Day", on saturday afternoons.

Coming from home which was like having been in a cavern, having spent the last two years at mother's exacting or even cruel service. Apart from my escapades to the Opera or my long walks, I never saw anybody, knew nobody except members of the family.

We took the tram to go to the 8th district where the Lampls lived. In the Döblerstrasse we went into a fine house, designed by Otto Wagner, which was unexpectedly full of light, and whose steps were so low that one could walk up to the last floor without getting out of breath.

A young man opened the door with a "Gott zum Gruss". His bald forehead and his noble features reminded me of a poet. He was neatly dressed, wore a grey flannel suit and a navy-blue shirt.

In a large clear room, there were several people who greeted us without disturbing me with prying looks. There were a few light-coloured pieces of furniture, modern, plants, and a long couch against one of the walls. It was surrounded by a mural tapestry with bright-coloured flowers on a black back-ground. I still have a piece of it, as a souvenir, around my bed.

I don't remember how things went the first times, I couldn't make out anything special. What struck me however was the uncommonly agreeable atmosphere, of kindness and serenity. The number of guests varied from one

time to the other. There were fifteen, maybe more. We chatted, smoked, laughed, groups formed.

At the heart of all these people was Hilde. One didn't notice her beauty at first. It was when she spoke or laughed that her cheeks flushed a delicate pink, her blue eyes flashed, her lovely rosy mouth revealed beautiful white teeth. All this wouldn't have been sufficient to make her so wonderfully engaging. She was incomparably warm-hearted, tender, gay, without the least affectation. Fresh and natural, she was perfectly conscious of her charm and was candidly pleased by that just as a flower could be pleased to diffuse its scent. She was totally good and under-standing. If one mentioned somebody who had done wrong, she would say "poor thing" because his trouble wasn't because of his deed but was due to his nature, his unhappy fate. As for her knowledge of spiritual matters I don't know anything. With her lively intelligence and sensitivity she instinctively guessed problems of all kinds, and without having known the deep abysses of life, she understood other peoples' suffering.

Young and charming, she and her sister Fritz had been adulated and painted by Egon Schiele and Oskar Kokoschka. But no picture could render Hilde's charm.

Like all the friends, I was immediately at the feet of this winged creature who, paradoxically, never lost her head. She made me think of Goethe's first love, Friederike Brion, fine and charming who, once outside her four walls, in natural surroundings, excelled in all bodily exercises - running, dance and games. She had no complex and when we had begged in vain a professional singer to divert us with a melody, Hilde picked-up her old guitar and sang simple songs.

She was the breath of life, the *raison d'être*, the apple of Fritz's eyes. One couldn't imagine one without the other. Yet they never expressed their love by cajolery or kissing.

Fritz was the son of an aulic councillor, a small dry man, very conscious of his rank, and of a diminutive Frau Hofrat, thin and authoritarian. Their two elder sons having been killed on the field of honour, Fritz was exempted from military servitude. Had he been called-up, he wouldn't have been able to fulfil his duties as a warrior. Since childhood he suffered terribly from regular bouts of otitis which, one feared, could make him deaf one day. Such permanent suffering would have undoubtedly wrecked other than him. Fritz, on the contrary, had formed and hardened himself spiritually by fighting against the pain. This weakness gave him the opportunity to study varied subjects and finally to master them. He thus became a Master in philosophy, art and history. But above all he was a poet. Acclaimed by the post-war Young Austria, he published his writings together with Franz Werfel. One foretold him a brilliant future.

His marriage with Hilde had serious consequences - of which Fritz didn't care about but which changed his destiny. First of all his parents were vigorously opposed to his marrying Hilde, a girl of too low a social rank. But Fritz loved his wife unconditionally and swore never to see his parents again. Not only did he lose their considerable fortune but he was all at once put before the necessity of earning a living.

Full of genius and naturally immensely productive, he sought an activity that combined art and commerce. He turned to blown-glass, a creative work if any, and by ways unknown to me, obtained an unhoped-for success. At the time of my making his acquaintance, he had an elegant boutique on the Burgring and was most successful in business in a circle of connoisseurs. How could one describe those slender vases, graceful, glittering with colours and shapes... Everything was exploited: his own imagination, copies of egyptian, greek, roman, venetian forms found in museums. He was completely happy but poetry was fading, far, very far away.

Hilde had started to learn dressmaking when she was sixteen, working as a handy girl in the best viennese dressmakers' salons, so as to reach, little by little, the Mastery in her profession.

During those years, her elder sister went to drawing and fashion classes in the Kunstgewerbeschule so as to combine her competence with her sister's practical work. When both sisters had finished their apprenticeship, old Mr. Berger retired from the Auer Gas company where he had worked for 30 years and from which he received a round sum. Not knowing what to do with the money, he gave it to both his daughters, who immediately established themselves in the vast premises of a house on the Rathausplatz, the elegant heart of Vienna. Their brothers, both architects, created a modern and original arrangement. The "Schwestern Berger" soon acquired extraordinary clients amongst the wives of ambassadors, theater and film stars or just the wives of rich captains of industry. They were perfectly happy, both complementary in the job they loved and which allowed them to know the town's celebrities.

Before going into more extensive details concerning the circle of friends without which one cannot imagine the Lampl, I must mention that a spirit, a beloved ghost still haunted their hearts.

By scraps of information and by sighs I learned that their heart was attached to a small young girl who had kept them company for several years. She was then a frail young girl, carelessly dressed, her unkempt hair falling loosely on her shoulders. She always walked around her arms loaded with books saying "I shall be the greatest actress in Germany". She was called Elisabeth Bergner. In Vienna she was sometimes given minor roles in small theaters; this is characteristic in Vienna - it systematically disregards its geniuses. But once these have acquired fame abroad, they are fêted like princes.

One day Elisabeth Bergner had enough of it and left for Berlin. In Berlin there was like a storm. She signed on in the best theaters where she was given the most interesting roles. I have never seen her on the stage,

only in films. She was really extraordinary. This little frail woman didn't act, she was the character down to the fingertips. Her success was like a wave of fire, a general upheaval, it was just her, her alone. Some time after she got married to the film-producer Paul Czinner who made a numberless amount of films with her, Shakespeare plays.

In that little round white face, one only saw her enormous devouring eyes. She was a being of air and fire, sometimes demoniacal. But oh how the Lampls loved and adored her as the impersonation of genius.

Berlin has always been the stepping-stone for young austrian artists. Not only do the Berliners - and the Germans in general, have flair but they are also madly generous, beyond measure. A star is born during the night, the next day everything lies at her feet.

Something similar happened to our friend Albert Ehrenstein. He had stories of bandits and soldiers translated from the chinese and had written a fantastic book. He became famous, even though his later novels were rather mediocre. But the first stroke was significant, editors from all sides asked him to write for them, paying him enormous sums in advance. Everywhere he went, his name had just to be mentioned for all doors to be opened to him.

When Margarete went to Berlin to make an exhibition of her paintings, Ehrenstein took her around into the most formidable milieux, amongst the greatest celebrities of the day. I suppose that then she didn't spend a single night in bed - going to the theater, receptions, parties, and the like.

The Lampls' group of friends all had more or less to do with the arts. In their house one could meet painters, architects, historians, musicians, dancers, writers. Conrad Tietze was one of the most honoured guests, art historian, university professor and author of numerous works. Small and frail, his fine head reminded one of a cameo. That couldn't be said of his wife Erika who was an art-critic. In her big owl-like head blinked small malicious eyes ( malicious she was).

Years later Floch told me that Mrs. Tietze sold her critics: should an artist want to make a career, he had to go into that horrible little woman's bed.

At the beginning of our relationship with the Lampls, we often met the architect Otto Bauer, a big surly very elegant man whose small flattened ears made him look like a faun. He was born in Olmütz, and tried to disguise his czech accent by speaking in viennese dialect. In those days he was accompanied by Elinor Tordis, a dancer on the wane, still lovely, who had known a great success in Germany.

The clou of every gathering was Paul Engelmann, also from Olmütz. Big and fat, with a large oily face, he bubbled over with vitality and funniness. He made us double up with laughter, cry with laughter.

It wouldn't be possible to tell his stories because the comical side was greatly due to his gestures and accent.

Peter Engel, his brother, was the best caricaturist in Vienna. His drawings could be seen in all the newspapers and even on posters on the busses. He was married to an Englishwoman, a small unobtrusive brunette whom he loved tenderly. This peaceful, tender and closely bound couple committed suicide when Hitler came into power. And so did Engelmann.

Our little darling was Georg Ehrlich, a little man whose looks didn't betray him, a genial designer (drawer?). He also made us burst with laughter when, impassive, he deformed every word in a grotesque manner.

He lived in the sweet company of Gerda Seitz, a lovely laughing angel, born of a russian mother and a german father. Her long and delicate oval face, her big madonna's eyes and especially her charming smile was a joy to see. But she had a relentless enemy in Georg's sister who never missed an opportunity to hiss into my ear that Gerda was not the woman for Georg; "instead of helping him up to make a career, she abased him"... Curiously, Ehrlich's drawings became more and more modelled. He then decided to sculpt. In post-war years, one could see statues by our compatriot in different public places in London.

It is now time to talk about Gisa Geert whose personality had some importance in our group of friends. She lived with Arthur Berger, Josef's elder brother. And to understand their story one must first know Arthur's

Of the four Berger children - two boys and two girls - Arthur was the most brilliant. Handsome, magnificently gifted, a dare-devil, seductive, he was full of wit and humour. He could have been an all-round winner like a thoroughbred had he not stupidly wasted his gifts. Stationed in Serbia during the 14-18 war, he found nothing better to do than to seduce a general's daughter. The result wasn't long coming. Ljuba was pregnant and the furious serbian general insisted on the couple's getting married immediately. This was a loathful experience for Arthur for whom this should have been passing love-affair. He took his wife to Vienna where they lived in a bohemian-style. Ljuba gave him three beautiful children but he, now weary, furious to be in someone's clutches, left her.

This poor young woman was torn away from her country, from her friends, and found herself in a sphere she knew nothing of, abandoned. Tall, with a majestic body, she unfortunately had no brains, no education and no good manners. We tried in vain to attract her in a friendly way into our family circle. She resisted at every attempt with the pride of a provincial. Her little brain only gave her two aims, her dresses and her hair-dress. Thus, finely dressed, proud of her beautiful body, she abandoned her children - charming children who deserved love. The two little girls and their brother, left by themselves, had to keep the house and do their cooking whilst their mother received these "gentlemen".Hilde often received the children with a tenderness overflowing with pity and kept them.

Why didn't she have her own children, tender and motherly as she was? Nobody dared to ask her that question.

So much for Arthur, an irresponsible man. After having left wife and children, he introduced Gisa Geert, his new lady-friend at Fritz and Hilde's. We never knew anything about her. Gisa was probably of Polish origin and had an assumed name. We didn't know if she still had her parents nor where she had grown-up. When Arthur met her, she was a modest typist... She wasn't pretty. Her big discontented lioness' head had prominent cheekbones, and she had nasty little grey eyes. Her dull blond hair fell on her shoulders. But her body was like one of Botticelli's beauties

Arthur was excited by the idea that he was her Pygmalion. He decided she was to become a dancer. And she, raving with love for her master, submitted with passion to all his demands, to every discipline necessary to reach her ends. Following her lover's advice, she left for Germany to take lessons from the abominable Gertrud Krauss then in vogue. There, Gisa observed, imitated, watched feverishly the slightest gesture of the great dancer, storing in her mind the slightest instructions. And although she had left behind her twenties long ago, she bent herself to do exercises meant for beginners of a much more tender age.

Homeless, like many inhabitants after the war, the couple moved into an abandoned military hut. Carl Ehrenstein, who had been their neighbour, told us about the terrible quarrels between Gisa and Arthur. The chairs, saucepans and books used to fly through the air in their hut. Nevertheless the chrysalis was fastly developing. Like a wild-cat in everyday life, always dissatisfied, her mouth full of insults, she became a nymph on the stage. She became completely happy and enchanted us when she danced to the music of Handel or Bach. But all of a sudden there welled-up a new force from deep inside her, no doubt atavistic, and she turned to folklore. There again she was masterful. Arthur had invented a mirth-provoking dance which had a lasting success; dressed on one side as a bridegroom with coat-tails, on the other as the bride in white robes, she would clasp herself so as to give the impression of a waltzing couple.

One can ask oneself why the Lampl received both Arthur's legitimate wife and his mistress, or other friends in all sorts of situations: they never judged nor criticized anybody and accepted people as they were.

The meetings usually took place in the Döblergasse flat; for the big occasions we were invited in the Berger sisters' salons on the Rathausplatz. Their seamstresses were away for a week-end, the chairs and worktables were taken out and the architect brothers, helped by painter-friends, covered the walls with bold scenes. A stage was built and the lights were covered with multi-coloured paper and there was a ball or dancing. There was a "Night in Venice", the "Hackney-carriage Ball", a "Night on the Moon". The guests had to come disguised and each one had to play his little scene.

Gisa or Elinor Tordis would dance on the stage, Joe gave a flute-concert, Hilde sang in a very sentimental way old boring Viennese songs. Groag, the architect played the fire-eater. My sister and I, dressed as Aborigines, boasted (licking our lips) the tender flesh of our latest missionary. We danced and flirted up to dawn. It was during one of these festivities that Carl Ehrenstein asked me to marry him. He lived in the shadow of his famous brother and he offered me a care-free life in Berlin. My refusal must have greatly affected him because some twenty years later, in London, he said, in front of his wife Maude: you see, I didn't die of grief!

I made the acquaintance of Joseph Floch who remained a devoted friend all his life. His big donkey-like head sometimes popped-up in the Döblergasse where he would repeatedly sketch my portrait. His admiration was so evident that Georg Ehrlich once gave me a lovely caricature depicting me being followed by Floch carrying my train. Floch and Bauer soon disappeared from Vienna and went to live in Paris. Bauer because a Rumanian princess had said to him "What, you here? Your place is in the world" and Floch because he sought a more subdued sky for his painting.

As to what about me attracted painters, I never discovered the reason. When I was fifteen, travelling with my parents, a stranger introduced himself as Schiele's brother-in-law and asked the permission to make a painting of me. Then, when I worked a year or two with Cizek, Philippi, his assistant, very excited, asked me to pose for him. I always refused. But my father introduced me to one of his patients, Heinrich Krause, an artist of the Sezession, for whom I posed for several weeks.

Every real model knows that a silent current flows between the artist and his instrument, a current without which a creation is impossible. Krause lived poor and ascetic with his sister in Alt-Breitensee. And I was there in their bare room, a silent nymph, my gold and silver hair falling on my shoulders. An art amateur bought my portrait which is now in a castle on the Danube. Floch made about sixty portraits of me, one of which was his first success in the Grand Salon.

I had no idea of my looks and still don't have. I didn't bother about my clothes until, one day a friend of the Lampl asked me, laughing: Miss must have fallen into a thorn-bush? and, as he was staring at my legs, I noticed that my stockings had been mended from top to bottom and looked like a delicate piece of embroidery. Hilde had overheard the remark and discreetly said: Mister musician, you have been particularly tactless... Ever since the end of the war I either wore my sister's old dresses or things made out of old soldiers' coats.

Mama's principle was to settle her eldest daughter first.

After this incident Hilde proposed to sell me the models which hadn't found a buyer at a low price. Now I was well-dressed and this brought my confidence up by one degree.

#### IV

Joe and Margarete were living with us since two years when a rumour ran that an estate of artists' houses was under construction. After having made his inquiry, my father immediately bought one of the houses. The Künstler-siedlung is still there of course, and when Josef recently went to see it again, some of his neighbours of old came out to greet him. The Estate is in the vicinity of Mauer, a little way out of the town. We used to go there by Zehnerwagen (tram n°10) which was familiar to us since we were children. One goes up a lovely alley which leads to a score of small houses surrounded by gardens.

Our young couple immediately moved-in although the walls still showed extended areas of dampness. My sister fell ill, one of her lungs was affected, and papa sent her to Italy.

This house was not only our dream come true, but at the same time it cut us off. Not only were we frustrated of our darlings' presence, but my sister couldn't be looked after by her parents and was free once more. She came back from Italy laden with presents and gold bracelets. In Rome she had met a theater director, an abhorred being by the name of Bragaglia, who demanded from then on that my sister be a costume and scene-designer. Every year she made prolonged stays in Rome.

Despite our sorrow, we became attached by body and soul to the house in Rosenhügel. Joe furnished it with exquisite taste, it was our haven. I spent week-ends there, Fritz and Hilde had their own room; and papa who had never considered his own well-being, felt very extravagant when he took a taxi to go to Mauer. It meant peace for him - no telephone, no urgent messages, no patients, but just Hilde's blushing smile and Fritz's florentine grace. I think papa fell in love with Hilde, in his chivalrous way, and that she was his last great joy. Mother, on the other hand, stayed quite indifferent to our friends' charm as she lived too intensely in the close world of her three sisters.

Although my sister's new way of life was known to all, nobody but her husband could have criticized her. But he kept silent during all the thirty-four years of their married life.

In the Döblergasse the kaleidoscope was subtly changing. Friends came and disappeared. Amongst the new ones there was Thal, Fritz's editor, accompanied by his too mundane heavily made-up wife who was visibly bored. She also bored us but not as much as Joseph Hauer, the composer of atonal music. When he came in, Hilde would look to the skies and would murmur "poor Fritz"! In fact nobody liked to lend an ear to Hauer's abstract theories. Fritz, affable as usual, paid all his attention to the musician's monotonous monologue which would only end at dawn. In the meantime everybody had slipped away... On the other hand Janovitch, the conductor and his wife, the lovely italian Megaera, made short but exciting visits. We would talk about opera, concerts, interpretation and, of course, there were always funny anecdotes about such and such a star.

Instead of Paul Engelmann there appeared another witty character, the incomparable Hans Oplatek who came straight from Prague. O Prague! In spite of having known centuries of austrian domination, it had kept intact its own culture and traditions. The population, on the whole, heavy, sullen, mistrustful but very industrious, shone by its intelligentsia, which burst with vitality, humaneness (chaleur humaine), and an unequalled sense of humour. Its artistic aspirations, of great value, brought in gusts of fresh air.

Oplatek had the gift of turning an evening's meeting into a jolly fête. He was tall, superbly elegant, handsome as a tan-faced god, he brimmed over with with gay spirits. He would reel-off for hours on end his long repertoire of burlesque jewish stories. His wife Ilonka, our enchantress, kept quiet in her corner, looking like an indulgent mother listening to her son's feats. She was Albanian-born, (or Serbian?) her parents had lived under turkish rule and had worn pantaloons like the turkish women. During several weeks Oplatek held us breathless, then disappeared. We asked Ilonka to give us an explanation. Yes, her husband was an enchanter, light-hearted and charming, who should have lived at some king's court. All their friends asked for them both, that is why Hans was always on the move to amuse his friends in Vienna, Prague, Budapest where he was welcomed with joy. In fact he had neither profession nor source of income. Ilonka was the one who made the family live. In those days she had opened a vegetarian restaurant in which she did the cooking, served and did the washing-up.... When her husband came home now and then, he would be received like the spoilt child that he was. His two daughters pampered him, served him his meals, saw to his wardrobe. When the nazis came to Vienna, Ilonka sought refuge in England with her children. (on the ship with Czech emigrants, one of her daughters met a young doctor who married her on the spot. He was later appointed by the UNESCO on world-affairs). In their desperate flight, they searched in vain for a trace of Hans. It was found out later that he had perished in the crematoriums.

We rarely saw Fritzi, Hilde's elder sister. She was a pretty brunette with big laughing eyes, half hidden under a brown fringe. During the 14/18 war she fell in love with a dashing young officer and married him. Their household didn't last long. Paul Hohenberg not only lost his good looks when he took on weight but became a fervent disciple of Rudolf Steiner. Anthroposophy became his world. He didn't see the world in its normal aspect any more, every-thing had to follow the pattern of the anthroposophical doctrines. Family-life became impossible, Fritzi left her husband. When Zuckmayer the playwright courted her, she thought their relationship would last, but Zuck left for Berlin without her. I saw this charming erring woman, unhappy, not knowing how to start on a new life. Finally the husband she had left had the idea of having a fine house built to Joe's design, with garden and swimming-pool in a residential district. Fritzi, dismayed went back to live with Hohenberg, a second child was born but this didn't make them happy again. Later the family emigrated to the States where one of their daughters became a well-known musician and the other a farmer.

One day Gerda Seitz told us that her sister was coming to Vienna. Olga Rinnebach arrived and we stood agape. This tall woman had the demeanour of a queen. In her wide flat face one only saw her big marvellous eyes with their iridescent shimmer; her small nose softened her features - had I been Goethe's contemporary I would have qualified her as divine; and her smile was bewitching. Added to her physical perfection, Olga had a marvellous alto voice which rang like a bell, a voice which could have filled the biggest concert-halls. But alas, this triumphant blonde nearly two meters high, couldn't be asked to appear on an opera stage. She was a long time unhappy, despite the exceptional gifts which she was unable to exploit. Until the day the Heavens inspired her. Whilst visiting a museum, she saw medieval musical instruments. She had an enormous lute made after the models she had seen in the museum, then searched the archives for ancient german, french and italian songs. With this provision of forgotten treasures, she gave concerts all over Germany. She had an enormous success. In the Berger sisters' workshop Olga often enchanted us with her beauty, her marvellous voice, her refined sense of music. Nevertheless, her stay in Vienna didn't last and she went back to Berlin where her tiny husband waited for her.

I now finally come to the heart of the family, to the Mother of four successful children. One sometimes saw an old stout woman seated in the best armchair of the flat, a peasant woman with her big cheeks wrinkled like an old apple. It was her, Paula Berger, the center of all our affection. Had the emperor of China come in unexpectedly, he would have left the seat of honour to the old mother. Her children loved her unconditionally. Why? Because she was The Mother who had sacrificed everything for her children, and who had ever given them unflinching affection.

As a young girl she had worked in the fields of her native Moravia. Then she came to the capital with husband and children, where she kept a modest grocery and where she wore herself out and denied herself to save every penny for her children's studies. She told me one day that her marriage with Mr. Berger had only been a marriage of convenience. She had neither known love nor tenderness. Man and wife tolerated one another with polite indifference. But the old lady was very intelligent, the descendant of an ancient moravian family, the Berans, which produced scientists, politicians and even bishops.

The old couple lived with the Lampl with such discretion that no stranger could have guessed their presence, but it was Mutter Berger who managed the housekeeping with a firm hand. She was an inspired cook who never looked into a cookery-book, and always kept an eye on every nook in the house. One rarely saw her husband, a tall man, who spent most of his time in a café playing card-games which was called "kiebitzen" in Vienna. (The Kiebitz is the "vanneau" in french (peewit), a bird not known to have a particular talent for playing cards). We also saw Mutter Berger cry very often. It was always because of Arthur who had wasted his life and abandoned his children. But her greatest joy was Hilde whom she idolized, Hilde and Fritz, the ideal pair. They were the ideal couple for us too, bound by a love so deep that nothing nor nobody could separate them.

My sister and Joe often came to the Döblergasse, Margarete had a genius for society, she shone by all her facets and brought life and gaiety to all gatherings. Like an actress in front of her public, she wanted to please, make people laugh, be admired; with her wit, funniness, talent for imitation, she succeeded without an effort. Her presence, her personality were so strong that neither Josef nor I could utter a single sensible word. We were eclipsed. That dear Joe had developed such an inferiority-complex that when he (rarely) spoke, he would sway from side to side on his chair and stammer.

I knew with shame and sadness that she had resumed her dissolute life disregardless of all.

Hilde and Fritz' charm continued, as before, to act upon us, we were passionately, affectionately attracted by them and their word was worth the word of the Scriptures: Fritz said - Hilde said - and Fritz was always right because of his vast knowledge. Besides he was never doctoral but expressed his convictions by witty sallies. Just as Hilde was charming, elegantly dressed, radiant, Fritz also had a lot of charm. I imagined him as a florentine lord, with the noble features of a poet carved in an ancient ivory sculpture. He also had a sober elegance, fine to see, was warm-hearted and infinitely friendly.

According to my description of things, one could think that we spent our time laughing and having fun. True enough, to laugh and be in a relaxed atmosphere were new to me, I wallowed in it like a happy child.

However, on many afternoons Fritz would read his poems or played records of Bach, Haendel or Boccherini on the gramophone. We talked about the latest books or exhibitions, of a play that had been particularly well-played; Reinhardt had moved into the Josephstadt Theater and brought original ideas in the way he made his actors play as well as in his dazzling scenery.

Nearly three years of happiness beyond words, and now fate knocked at our doors.

As she was going to the market, old Mrs. Berger broke her thigh-bone. It was a catastrophe for a person of her weight. There was no other known cure at that time but to keep the patient lying-down immobilized until the bone was mended. Hilde in a heartbreaking manner, called my father who was usually too busy in his district to go elsewhere. Mutter Berger's case was made worse by the fact that she suffered from acute bronchitis. Papa prescribed that she should stay seated in bed to avoid congestion and to go on a strict diet to lose weight.

That was in August 1927. My parents went away on holidays and on those holidays my father suddenly died of embolism. His death, eternally mourned, changed our lives from one day to the next.

Hilde had to consult another doctor. This one considered that his patient needed rest and allowed her to lie-down normally. The result was soon to come, Mrs. Berger had pneumonia and died.

We became doubly orphans, stricken to the depths of our being; for, whatever the ordeals one meets in life, the death of a mother, of a father makes an everlasting mark. At home and at the Lampls there was an empty chair, irreplaceable. The need to keep close together became a painful necessity. The little house in the Rosenhügel became our refuge.

Other events began to occupy us. Arthur had been working for years for the Sacha Film company then for the german UFA. Eisenstein, the film-producer, had him come to Moscow. From then on we had no news from him. This made us laugh because Arthur never wrote and was a nice rascal.

During his absence, Gisa Geert realized that she was pregnant. This made her happy because she thought that by having a child this would bring her closer to the man she loved. Nevertheless she took things lightly and, to swagger, continued to dance and to gambol. The baby was born in his eighth month, it was a splendid boy. Gradually it was established that the little one was abnormal. Gisa was thunderstruck. She realized that to live, and make him live, she would need special care. After a long search, she heard of a Dr. König, a viennese man who had founded villages for backward children in Scotland. The doctor's theory consisted in putting these children in normal families and later in teaching them simple jobs so as to make them independant. He made them become bakers, weavers or had them work in the fields. It was an ingenious idea. All the same, one had to pay the whole stay in Scotland for a minimum of fifteen years.

Gisa didn't have the means. From then on she started to work feverishly, going on any stage and giving gymnastic-lessons. (We all became her pupils which didn't prevent her from being brutal and we were often incapable of going up or downstairs any more). She hoped all the time her Arthur would return to the fold and share the burden with her. In vain. Arthur had disappeared in an immense country whose frontiers were hermetically sealed.

The family was starting to get anxious about Arthur's fate. The consulate was applied to, the Russian embassy, always to be met by a "niet". We begged travellers to look for him in Russia; with no result. We had to acknowledge that this son, this brother, this husband was either in prison or had been murdered.

This was the ruin of all Gisa's hopes. Not only had she lost the man of her life, the father of an impotent child, but how could she continue her career without him? It was he that had inspired her, he that had designed her costumes and sets. She became more than ever that savage, unapproachable lioness. In the end luck was with her. A theater in Milano needed a choreographer; she left for Italy.

From there she sent innumerable letters asking for news from Arthur. Some friends who happened to pass in Milano told how she was up to her reputation, breaking chairs on her pupils' backs. But I am anticipating events. After a long stay in Milano, she was called to Madrid. I got news from her during the occupation. She was kind enough to send me big parcels full of victuals and clothes. Then we lost all trace of her and she was never seen again.

Life went on, our circle of friends changed and formed again. The Lampls sought refuge more and more often in the house in Rosenhügel. As for me, I was going through dreadful times. Since my father's death, mama had nervous breakdowns, an ordeal for us all. It was only once he was gone that she realized what he meant to her. She could rely on a small pension from the Railways for which papa had worked for years. Mother had to let our flat to a young doctor who could take over father's practice and pay a good rent. Amongst the candidates she chose a hateful couple who became more and more obtrusive. We just kept the living-room and my room for us. Then mother let herself be persuaded to give-up my room.

Now I had to live with mama in a single room, completely at the mercy of her insatiable curiosity. Every one of my gestures was observed and became the subject of comments. Moreover I had broken-off a four year-long liaison. Nothing kept me back any more. And when I met Elisabeth Hargrove, an American, the widow of a journalist, who had spent the 14/18 war-years in Paris where she had many friends, I decided to leave for France. Elisabeth gave me letters of introduction.



I had a feeling of remorse in abandoning my mother and I went to see a dominican missionary for counsel. He said : Motherly love? When I told my mother that I intended to go to China, she replied "Wherever you go , you will always find your home here".

I left within twenty-four hours. In the train I felt exulted to be by myself and without attachment.

Torn from my native-country which seemed to rot under me, freed from a bondage that had lasted too many years, I was mad with joy. I would never more give-up my freedom. I accepted to struggle-through in another land. Coming from a dead city, I was stunned by the noise in Belfort, the coming and going, the whistles of the many steam-engines ready to start - that was life. I would not vegetate any more in Vienna - I would go there on holidays but I would never come back definitely. (1931)

## VI

After a year in Paris and three months in Marocco, I went back to Vienna to see friends and family, strongly marked by my stay in France. Life in Paris had been terrible, a renewed struggle each day. My never knowing if I was going to have enough to eat the next day or how to pay the hotel - "L'Etoile d'Or", rue de l'Abbé Grégoire. Yet, the beauty and novelty (*étrangeté* = *peculiarity*?) made me wander for kilometers each day, from one monument to another, from a noisy shopping street to the most distinguished abodes. I had met a hundred very different people, been in milieux unknown to me before, seen stupefying things, subtle or ignoble. The months spent in the blinding light of the sun in Marocco made me discover the fascination for Africa.

After the agitation of these last months abroad, Vienna seemed calm, like dead. The old trams creaking on their rails for more than half a century, the few slow-moving cars. Nothing had changed since my childhood.

I was well received by my mother. Our separation had brought us closer; we had many things to tell one another. I went to see my family, my childhood friend, then I rushed to the Lampl. It was marvellous to see them again, to be surrounded by friendship and affection, and yet - yet! Nothing seemed as before. I was struck to see them in their closed world, always delighted by the same puns, laughing at the same old jokes. I must admit that I was vexed by their lack of interest in my life at large, a life in a world in which everything moves and is constantly renewed. My experiences in Paris and in Marocco just didn't interest them. After my holidays I went back to Paris relieved.

Later I heard that the events in Germany with Hitler's coming to power had made them ill; Fritz had to keep to his bed after having read the Braunbuch in which the manhunting in the streets was described, the torture, the brutalities perpetrated in a country we had loved and adored up to then. But in Austria it was felt that one was safe from such horrors, especially as Mussolini had promised to protect our frontiers. The well-to-do continued to live peacefully. In the meanwhile the population was living in anguish because of the monstrous unemployment. Thousands were out of work since five or six years.

My dressmaker told me how many young men crossed-over to Germany at night-time to have at least something to eat and who wore a uniform to have something to put on.

In all this viennese insouciance, only Josef and Margarete were conscious of terrible things to come. They were ready to go anywhere. In 1934 they had an opportunity. Joe was commissioned to build several hotels in Palestine, then a British protectorate. In the midst of the jewish fanatics and the no-less fanatic Arabs, they found the English to be objective and realists. Two years later they came to live in London.

In the meanwhile mama had left the flat in Breitensee and lived in lodgings in a tram-driver's house in Hietzing. When I declared that I was staying definitely in France, Mama warned me that if I left her, she would dispose of my personal things. So I was not surprised to see some of our silverware on the tram-driver's sideboard. There was nothing left of my heritage. All the same, mama always welcomed me tenderly and when, in 1935 she came to visit us at the Impasse du Rouet, she brought me a big carpet and a few small valuable objects.

The Berger sisters had left their saloons on the Rathausplatz and were now in smaller premises on the Josephsplatz, one of the loveliest historical places in Vienna. Georg Ehrlich had left the charming Gerda Seitz to attach himself, much to his sister's joy, to a very rich heiress with a mauresque beauty. Bettina Bauer, a rather gifted artist, was a worldly woman, refined, not in love with Georg but decided to launch (?) him. Just as I was coming to Vienna, I don't know in which year, she had illustrated a collection of Fritz's poems, because Fritz now only saw Bettina, Bettina the most gifted, the most beautiful, the most witty of women.

The ideal couple had ceased to be one. And Hilde, like another Mme. de La Fayette, received her rival like a friend.

The nazis' arrival in Vienna swept-away the last illusions. For all those who were menaced, intellectuals, pacifists, democrats it was a mad rush to get away. People went to Switzerland or to France; many sought asylum in Hungary and were delivered to their executioners. Paris was swarming with refugees waiting for an affidavit to go to England or the United-States.

Though war was imminent, I made a hop to London in July 1939. I found the English calm and firm, parading in uniform in the streets whereas in France people didn't take things seriously and thought themselves invincible.

It was an unbelievable joy to find Margarete and Josef again. Mama was there too, having succeeded in fleeing the hell in Vienna. She was hardly recognizable. Once a big imperious woman who took great care to be faultlessly dressed, she was now a little thin, flat-breasted lady. Her eyes were always reddened by the tears she secretly shed; she never spoke of the horrors and humiliations she had witnessed in the streets. My little fourteen month-old boy and Florian-Raymond, a little older, were her only joy.

The hours we spent together in the big clear room in Portsdown Road are unforgettable, tender and joyful, although we knew that this was our last meeting. A happy closely bound family.

When the time came to return to France, mama went with us to the railway-station. As the train started, mama walked beside it, making small steps and crying. I held François up to the window so that she could still see him. We knew, she and I, that we would never see each other again in this world.

## VII

For seven terrible years we stayed separated without being able to establish a contact with one another. I knew the Bergers were under the ferocious bombing by the Germans; and they feared that I could be a victim of the nazis. Finally I received a message from the Red Cross which announced that my relatives were alive. A year later, Elisabeth Hargrove had a message passed from America saying that all were well except my mother.

It took another two years before I received the first letters from my sister: "It is as if I was writing in the water, not knowing whether you are still alive... If you have perished, I shall never be happy again".

Then she got my answers and answered back with delirious words of joy. The war was virtually finished though "doodle-bugs"(V 1) still fell on London. "Come, come straightaway, we are mad with joy". It was easier said than done. The sea was still infested by mines, the mail didn't work properly, our countries were disorganized, the controls were severe. For days on end I queued with the crowd in front of the British embassy. The British were first served, of course.

Margarete continued to insist on our coming - not knowing about the tragedy of my marriage - and when I wrote to her about it, she thought I had been driven mad by the ordeals I had been through.

Paul was so sweet and charming that he couldn't have done (me) the least harm. The Lampls, she wrote, insisted on having the honour of lodging us.

Everything has an end. The memorable day came when, after an extenuating journey, I fell into my sister's arms at Victoria Station. We scrutinized each other's face, had we changed? Her slightly roundish viennese figure had given place to a slim elegance, her features were accentuated; but the dark agates of her eyes blazed as ever. She took us, my son and I, to her flat where Josef and their son were waiting for us. This flat gave me a shock, it was a dark shabby, poorly furnished basement. In Paris, in spite of the war, we had lived in a big bright flat.

After a thousand embraces and most tender kisses, my sister explained that since they had settled in their flat in Portsdown Road they had had to quit their lodgings nineteen times because of bombing. Joe, being an Austrian, had been interned for months in a camp while she had wandered from one place to another with her child. Finally she had found their present lodging which was a safe haven during the bombings; to the extent that during the alarms, their neighbours hurried in and would find a place to sit on the bath-tub and the toilet.

What about the Lampls? Well, the Lampls lived and prospered in London. They lived in a fine house in a residential district. Their business was flourishing. Someone had brought bars of gold for them from Vienna, which were the basis of their actual situation. Now, they had never offered to help their brother and sister-in-law.

Margarete could have made fashion-drawings for Hilde to earn a few shillings, thus taking Fritz's place whom her sister missed terribly... Hilde went on making dresses, Fritz had set up a glass-blowing business. Fortune came to him in an unexpected way, in times of war, the laboratories needed phials and stills, Fritz made it his speciality. The demand exceeded supplies. Their fortune was now of several thousand pounds sterling.

Although they had "fought" to have the honour of offering me shelter, I didn't see them come. Some time later the Bergers and I were invited to a garden-party in their house in Ferncroft Avenue. Hilde welcomed us on the threshold, looking pale in her bright red dress. Fritz was as friendly as usual, yet without the effusions one could have expected after years of separation and suffering. The guests that walked around on the fine lawn were for the most part unknown to us. Gay, well-dressed, they talked of things of which I knew nothing about. In this elegant crowd I felt sad, shabbily dressed, swollen by years of malnutrition.

Torn from their land, their native-country, their character had changed. Success and fortune had made them despise people who lacked talent or luck. Instead of helping Joe and his wife, they mocked them for their misery. They approved Melly Hoffer when she declared that it was unworthy of an architect to vegetate in a miserable flat.

(Luckily, Joe got a job in the London County Council which was badly-paid but which allowed them to live sparely). After so many ordeals, I assumed things philosophically.

The basement in Warwick Avenue was the paradise in which I had found my loved-ones again after the terrible tempest.

The prime necessity for me was to find a job as soon as possible to avoid being a burden to my poor dear ones. As luck would have it Noëmi Bentwich, a school-teacher, was looking for an assistant and agreed to take me along with my son; That was a stroke of luck because in England one didn't accept strangers, except for servants or teachers.

For two or three years, my son and I lived in Kent then in Sussex. For lack of means I seldom went up to London. Letters from my sister kept me informed of what was going on.

One day I read and re-read one of these letters without being able to understand. Something unthinkable, impossible had happened - the Lampls were ruined. The extent of the disaster soon came to be known. Fritz, overwhelmed with work, had employed a secretary for years, a very competent secretary, a real pearl who, as a managing woman, held the business in her expert hands.

#### SIC TRANSIT GLORIA MUNDI

The blown-glass activity had known such a success that Fritz decided to add ceramics, a new branch that Lucie Rie brought to perfection. (Lucie Rie was a small, thin, flat-chested woman who had replaced the lovely Bettina Bauer). In other words, everything was selling marvellously well, more especially with this efficient secretary who saw to everything: the workers' wages, book-keeping, orders, correspondence, clients. Fritz was only busy creating.

That year the Lampls wanted to go on holiday and Fritz popped round to his bank to withdraw a moderate sum of money. The bank-clerk, embarrassed, told him "but sir, there is nothing left on your bank-account". And Fritz, with a homeric laugh said "What! there is nothing left of my 50 000 pounds!? Call the manager!" After a certain time the manager came and, getting close to Fritz's ear, discreetly murmured: "We are sorry to tell you that your bank-account is empty"... Fritz, surprised, didn't believe his ears, went to see Hilde and together they roughly worked-out their expenditures. Nothing led them to conclude that they had spent excessive sums. The secretary ought to know; but by a curious coincidence, the secretary had given notice and was not to be found. Then Fritz remembered that not to be bothered by material needs he had always given her blank cheques. So it was she, she who had served him faithfully for years! A detective was engaged to seek her out. She was found. She was indicted and condemned to several years in prison - but where was the money? The astute woman had a lover who had gone abroad with the hoard.

The Lampls were totally ruined. Their shame was all the greater for having been so gullible and for having been had like children, and for having been so magnanimous with a criminal. An immeasurable affliction and an anguish for the future must have tormented them. But when their friends, completely panicked, came to console Hilde and Fritz, the latter told them that it didn't mean a thing and that they still had sufficient means to go on working. Their morale seemed unaffected but their bodies took the mortal blow. Fritz had a heart-attack.

Hilde began to suffer a martyrdom that no one could suspect. During the daytime Hilde made dresses and did the book-keeping at night. In the afternoons she ran to see Fritz in hospital because when she was one minute late Fritz began to be swamped with sweat. Finally her strength also failed her. She had never in her whole life been ill, now she was growing thin and complained of an insurmountable fatigue. Her doctor diagnosed a galloping leuchaemia but kept the diagnosis secret from her patient.

I would have liked to efface what follows, to have the delicacy not to reveal the long agony of our beloved ones. For months on end they came in and out from one hospital to the other; and when one of them lay in bed at home, the other was in the University College Hospital.

Margarete, whom Hilde had often disapproved, left her own family every morning to make the long trip to Ferncroft Avenue to look after her sister-in-law. My sister's tenderness and devotion were without bounds, considering that she had just published a book which was having a brilliant success. All the newspapers were full of praise for it.

But instead of looking after her own affairs, she stayed by Hilde's bedside. And Hilde candidly murmured "I always said you were a genius..." One day Margarete told her that it was she who had obtained the Lampls an affidavit to get them out of Vienna, and who had managed to get gold out for them. The dying woman gave her a look that implored for forgiveness.

Here I must talk about my sister. Since her youth she had only lived for her pleasure, often in a scandalous way. In that she wasn't different from our greatest saints who had suddenly realized the vanity of their life. In 1938 Margarete had dreamed one night that the nazis were throwing people alive into the flames. From then on her conscience never left her in peace any more. Like everywhere she went, she made lots of friends in England, and among them there were influential people. To them she had appealed to obtain the affidavits, that is to say to have the guarantee from two british subjects to save a person in danger.

She thus saved about thirty persecuted people and lodged them. Her small flat which had been the subject of mockery, she said, was littered with mattresses. She spent the day in her tiny kitchen cooking for all these people. Neither Josef nor the Lampls approved of this charity beyond measure; and the persons that had been saved, once safe either in the USA or in Canada, promptly forgot her, except our dear cousin Stevens who during all his life sent her food, money and clothes.

Back to our friends, who despite their puerile behaviour we would always love. We sent a telegram to Fritz Hohenberg in New York to come without delay if she wanted to see her sister for the last time. She came. And here is another cruel example of human nature. We were expecting her to be crushed with pain. Not at all. Without a word, she opened Hilde's cupboards one by one and took out all the dresses, tailored-dresses, furs and precious linen to wrap them up. She found a magnificent engraved solid-silver tea-service which she sewed in a thick sackcloth to get it through the customs.

The day Fritz died, watched-over by Lucie Rie, the nurses put a screen around Hilde's bed. Her last little Court, Litty Kloss, Ilonka, Ljuba, my sister and I, surrounded her to console her. She was sobbing with despair.

Three weeks later we accompanied a second coffin for, despite the loosening of their ties, despite Fritz's infatuation for Bettina Bauer and Lucie Rie, the one couldn't survive without the other.

## VIII

We were physically and morally worn-out, running for weeks from one sick person to the other, torn with anguish and sorrow, helpless before the cruelty of fate. The curtain had fallen on those years of delight which had embellished our lives.

## EPILOGUE

We weren't left any time to weep. Josef was the nearest living relative and, as such, was designated as the sole legal successor of the departed. He was stupefied to hear the crushing truth. The Lampls' lovely house didn't belong to them, it was just let to them and the rent had not been paid for several years. The gas and electricity bills showed an enormous consumption due to the oven used for the ceramics, these bills were piled-up on Fritz's writing-table. The landlord was angry when he discovered that Fritz had had an oven installed in the basement, to bake the ceramics, which was strictly prohibited. He sued Josef whose clever solicitor turned the lawsuit into a pecuniary compensation. To meet the enormous debts, it would have been necessary to sell the furniture. It so happened that the most beautiful pieces of furniture had been lent by friends, who now wanted them back.

All that was left was sold, the big carpets, the superb mirrors, the vases and exotic curios. There was a unique collection of books containing rare editions. But there again the beautiful gigantic art-books had only been lent... The inheritance, if it can be called one, was so chaotic, so muddled-up that Josef had to struggle for two years to clear-up things and pay the debts.

Hilde and Fritz now seemed to us to have been like two careless children living gaily far beyond their means, sure to get over their difficulties. They never seemed to have considered the possibility of an end. (*of their end?*)

To clear the house, every nook and cranny of it had to be inspected. In the two cellars heaps of porcelain, glasses and silverware were found, enough for several families. These things had been forgotten, never used, and dated back to the late Madame Hofrat. (*Fritz's mother*).

Margarete and Josef shared them out as souvenirs to all the friends of this unforgettable pair.

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