

NOVEMBER 1918 – A GERMAN REVOLUTION

By Alfred Döblin

PASSAGES OMITTED FROM THE WOODS TRANSLATION

An English translation of Döblin's enormous epic novel of the First World War's chaotic and inconclusive end was published in the early 1980s by Fromm International (a now defunct publisher). The two volumes, translated by John E Woods and titled *A People Betrayed* and *Karl & Rosa*, not only completely omitted Döblin's first volume ([*Citizens and Soldiers*](#)), but also cut some 200 pages from the subsequent texts.

A single story line concerning the dramatist Erwin Stauffer makes up some three quarters of the deleted texts. The remainder comprise nine passages, most of which relate back to events in the missing first volume.

This post presents my translations of those nine passages. The more substantial Stauffer storyline will be presented in a subsequent post. For each passage, I give the location in the 4-volume hardback edition published by S Fischer in 2008, as well as the page in the Woods translations where the passage should be inserted.

Fischer edition	Woods translation
Vol.1: Bürger und Soldaten (Citizens and Soldiers)	-
Vol.2: Verratenes Volk	November 1918: A German Revolution: A People Betrayed (pp. 1 – 305) The Troops Return (pp. 309 – 642)
Vol.3: Heimkehr der Fronttruppen	
Vol.4: Karl & Rosa	Karl & Rosa

(1) Fischer Vol.2, p.45; Woods p.31.

This scene continues from Ch. 27 of Citizens & Soldiers

A RETURNEE

An elderly Procurator from the little town where First Lieutenant Becker and Lieutenant Maus had spent the final days of their time in hospital had waited all through the War for his missing son, who, like so many other Alsatian lads, was rumoured to have gone over to the French. When troops led by General Gouraud entered the city, the Procurator was standing near Schirmecker Gate and – saw his son.

Several days have passed since Gouraud's entry. And so the Procurator, blessed with this joy, felt no temptation to monitor closely all the weighty orders, decrees, revocations to which the city of Strasbourg had become subject, nor the varying extent to which they were put into effect. Instead he invited his son to pay a visit to his little paternal town, and the son's colonel granted him two days' leave. And so off we go with the two of them to the little forest-girt town, leaving the charming misty city of Strasbourg to its lanes, alleys, squares, to its flower

and vegetable markets, to its covered arcades, to its suburbs of Königshofen, Kronenburg, Schiltigheim, Ungemach, Ruprechtsau, to the meandering Ill and the River Rhine, on the justified assumption that anyone with the right means can peruse those decrees at his leisure.

Rumours of the lost-and-found son had spread through the little town. So when they arrived – Procurator in his familiar civilian grey, son in the uniform of the liberating army – a crowd was already thronging the bleak station forecourt. A delegation from the Provisional Town Council stood freezing on the platform. Two young ladies wrapped for winter, surrounded by many older ladies, presented huge bouquets together with a few barely intelligible words – to the Procurator for his steadfastness, and to the son for his bravery.

A lovely festive procession formed up that took in the entire assembled crowd, at its head dear little schoolchildren who kept being elbowed aside, then policemen clearing a path into the town for the reunited couple – it was only a three minute walk; behind the two heroes came the red-nosed delegation, the mummified maids of honour, the Red Cross ladies and the simple masses who were later depicted as The Public and were in fact a number of unemployed persons.

Numerous gaunt dogs joined in, to the surprise of the heroic son treading again the soil of his native place. These had once belonged to private families, some to officers' families, or were barracks hounds uncared for since the withdrawal on Wednesday 13th November. The private owners had kicked the creatures out on the grounds they could no longer be fed. "Take up your staff, and be off into the world," said these owners male and female, often weeping; "We ourselves have no food; you are old enough to stand on your own feet." A vigorous struggle ensued between owner and outcast. The dog couldn't understand, it knew nothing of coupons for fat, bread and meat, there was a howling outside the house, the well known front door that, to its bafflement, remained shut. At last it realised: they don't want me. And when they now joined in the procession, it was because they had spotted their former owner in the crowd and meant to reclaim him, walk alongside just like the father with his lost son.

When it reached the Procurator's house, the procession dispersed. There were several cheers for the returnee and the French army, then everyone fled from the cold. Hard-hearted ladies and gentlemen were beset by barking leaping tail-wagging pets. The chronicler is in the happy position of being able to confirm that, on this morning, many a despairing private dog was restored to its old home, partly borne along by the general joyful mood, and partly on the consideration that now, surely, those promised trains would arrive bringing wine and grain.

The dear little old town in which we now find ourselves is, in terms of age, no second best to radiant Strasbourg. Here even Frankish and Saxon emperors had held court within the walls and hunted in the gloomy forests. Later the town was unable to rise above the production of hops. No one knows why. In one respect, it is true, this was a blessing for the town: since it made no effort to activate its ancient legal title to welcome the German emperor within its walls, it was spared the pain of the dethronement and the tumult of revolution as experienced by the citizens of Berlin.

Among the crowd that forms this guard of honour we notice a lone lanky invalid. He has a sticking plaster over his left temple, and a thick dressing over his mouth, as if he's just had a tooth out. We press a hand to our brow and think back. This man, standing so anonymously in the crowd, is already known to those who experienced the week of revolution here. Slowly a scene with a stool emerges, he climbs on, they see him make a speech to a small crowd in a

narrow street, in his hands he has a newspaper, he reads from the *Strassburger Post*: “Shreds”. That was on 11th November. They see him in another scene: he pushes through a mighty throng, it’s Revolution Day in the market square, an old Prussian general struts alone along the sidewalk, no one salutes him. The lanky man is a local Pharmacist, he’s made his way to the speakers’ platform with its red flag flying, and he orates, and orates. Oh dear, several asked themselves at the time, will this end well, will he be able to answer later for all those words pouring from his capacious mouth?

Here we have the answer. When the revolting German soldiers departed Alsace, he received a blow to the left temple; a second blow, an uppercut to the region of the left upper jaw, rendered him for some time incapable of speech. This occurred on the day the French security troops entered Strasbourg, Thursday 21st November. The human eye can discern no link between the two events. The blows were foretold in a letter on Wednesday 13th November, the day the German regiments withdrew. The following Wednesday, the 20th, when in Berlin the revolutionary victims were being ceremoniously laid to rest¹, he was favoured with a letter addressed to “Pharmacist So-and-so, purveyor of filth, revolutionary”. Again he was advised of mutilations to his limbs. The police showed a curious lack of interest, in either the letters or himself. Nervously he observed a shift in the public mood. On Thursday 21st November, as he was opening the shop, it happened. He was assaulted in the pharmacy. He was grateful to the assailants for their choice of location, where bandages and the little dispenser were on hand. So here he is in the crowd, bearing no grudges and hoping for good weather.

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The elderly Procurator is sitting with his son in his big old-fashioned dwelling. The office is closed today. The Chief Clerk has not foregone the chance, when he hears the apartment door close, to emerge from the filing room into the corridor dressed in his frock coat and, touched with emotion, to hold out his hand to the son whom he knew as a little boy. Then he took his leave. In the living room the son stands, steel helmet in hand, before the garlanded picture of his mother between the wall clock and the sideboard. He doesn’t move. Behind him the father, head bowed. A sobbing can be heard in the doorway. It’s the old housekeeper.

Then the son makes a decision, places his helmet on a chair, the housekeeper enters, takes the helmet, the son speaks kindly to the loudly weeping woman, who has covered her face with her blue apron. He unfastens his belt, takes it off with all the attachments, unbuttons the jacket, asks where his green loden jacket is. “It’s all there,” the father nods. The housekeeper brings the jacket, they sit facing one another in the bay window, which in summer is green and shady. The son in a thick fleece jacket and puttees and military boots, he is still the soldier. He asks after former teachers, the father makes a dismissive gesture: “Across the Rhine.”

“Who actually is still here? Zittel’s gone, and the headmaster, that old Caesar enthusiast who made or intended to make excavations in Alesia, where Vercingetorix fought.”

The father is frankly amazed: “You remember this, after Gallipoli, after Syria, after the Somme?”

“Yes, just imagine,” the son smiles, with an ironic twinkle. How, for goodness sake, do the people here actually envisage Syria or Constantinople and Gallipoli? Why actually should we let them gobble us up whole?

¹ See *Citizens & Soldiers* ch. 19.

“But the war, this Hell you had to go through.”

The son, at ease: “There were nice days too. Some good memories, wonderful amusing things. Could all have been worse. But I for one shan’t let my war memories be stolen from me by patriotic hogwash. None of us will be up there on a granite plinth. No sir. I see a great time coming, father, for stonemasons and sculptors. And medals will rain down. Thanks from the Fatherland. The Fatherland so highly venerated thanks those who are worthy of even more veneration: us, so long as we’re alive, and those who are no longer around. You wait, father, they’ll prate like blazes over every little chap and peasant lad – as long as they’re dead. As for us who are still alive, I foresee something else. But I suspect we shall make our voices heard.”

The Procurator nervously stroked his white moustache, murmured: “Interesting views.”

As the housekeeper spread the white tablecloth, she looked across at the bay window, the father, the son. Her face quivered with emotion in every little wrinkle. The son noticed her tender gaze, called her over, they exchanged greetings without formality.

The father: “There are such curious fates. You know the cabinet-maker Jund, the young fellow who built the bookcase, your library? He was a solid chap. You got on well with him.”

“Of course, Jund. Where is he?”

“Never came back. Not yet, anyway.”

“With the Prussians?”

“Nothing at all is known. We thought he might be with the Foreign Legion, but no Jund has turned up so far. His wife is on tenterhooks, not knowing if he’ll come or not. But not what you’re thinking. Across the road from her there’s a tinsmith², a sharp fellow, did well for himself in the war, he hitched up with her, and now he’s bought up all kinds of property left by the Reich Germans, and the two of them are doing well. And Mrs Jund is wondering if her husband will come back. Not exactly looking forward to it.”

The son stared into the distance, head propped on his hand. The Procurator was puzzled but happy to see him deeply serious.

The son: “So that’s how it is here. We too shall wait. We shall settle scores. Even if Jund never comes back, we are back. Don’t believe, father, that everything will go on as before.”

Barbara set out wine on the table. She had smartened herself up and called happily across to the bay window: “Counsellor! Mr René!” She was substituting for the mother.

(2) Fischer vol.2, p.309, Woods p.202.

A LITTLE MISCELLANY, ALL KINDS OF EVENTS

There’s no sign of peace in Trier, to the dismay of a visitor. People in Cologne get up, telephone, and lie down to sleep. Meanwhile they busy themselves with things they can make nothing of.

² Döblin has forgotten that in Ch.2 of *Citizens & Soldiers*, Jund is the tinsmith, not the stationer’s husband.

Maurice Barrès in Trier

Maurice Barrès, the French writer³, had attached himself to the Americans, who reached Trier on 1st December.

His dream was that all land to the west of the Rhine which now belonged to the Germans should be attached once again to the culture of his own country. He researched like a diver who descends to the bottom of the sea and there discovers a shipwreck, on the hunt for clues to ancient attachments. He yearned for any sign of Celto-Romanic life.

So on a cold December morning he is standing in the street of this German diocesan town. No sullen grumbling crowds as in Metz, gazing on as the hated occupation marches away, nor the delirious joy of Strassburg. Alienation, emptiness, danger. Field kitchens rumbling one behind the other, regimental music, a few youngsters.

He sat uneasily in one of the few open restaurants for a meal with a journalist, a bald Lorrainer⁴ who had latched on to him. He tapped him on the arm: "So, you were right."

The Lorrainer: "I hope I still know my Germans. You thought they'd feel liberated, like the Alsatians and us Lorrainers. Whatever were you thinking. Here they're honest to goodness Germans, however many Roman remains are uncovered from Augusta Treverorum."

Barrès: "The fact is, they all feel they must keep their voices down. So what do you make of it, for God's sake? Orders from above? Or is it genuine?"

The Lorrainer was surprised: "Genuine! And the most natural thing in the world. The Germans grieve at their liberation."

"Then I am right: they identify with the Kaiser, the army, the war."

"Totally. You didn't believe it?"

Barrès, glancing at the waiter: "Does the fellow understand what we're saying? Please!" He jumped in fright, then continued quietly, eyes on the empty plate: "Are they poisoning us?"

The Lorrainer patted his hand and laughed: "You're a writer. It all makes such an impression on you."

"But the consequences," Barrès glared at him, "what consequences do you draw from it? Where is it heading? We need this region. If we don't hold the Rhine frontier, we are lost. And with these people ..."

The Lorrainer rubbed his bald skull. He sighed: "You're staying here today, maybe tomorrow too, keep your ears open, ask. I'll help you. It's all a matter of time. If France were to govern the Rhineland for a century, peacefully, then a transformation would be possible. I said: peacefully. For in war these people would set on France from the rear. A century or so."

Barrès: "Good. And it's thought impossible that after this victory we cannot hold this region peacefully for a century?"

The Lorrainer regarded him gravely, head lowered: "Since I have spent my entire life under German rule, I can tell you: no. Hold, yes, but peacefully, no. You have spoken often of the

³ See *Citizens & Soldiers*, ch.21.

⁴ He was introduced in ch. 29 of *Citizens & Soldiers*.

probability of a rebirth of Germany. However you twist and turn: you can never live in peace with a defeated people – unless you absorb them all. And never, never – I can tell you this, Monsieur Barrès, with complete certainty, based on my lifelong experience – never will Germany's defeated class, the Kaiser's family, the generals, the officers, the Pan-German league, give up their thirst for revenge."

The waiter filled the soup bowl. They waited till he had gone. Barrès, huskily: "So? Then we must get rid of that class." The Lorrainer dipped the ladle into the hot tomato soup: "That's what the revolutionaries want – but you don't like them either."

"I have no faith in them. My dear friend, today you are quite horrific, you bring me to despair. What kind of perspectives are these."

"We have learned from the war. The first thing is, know your enemy's strengths. You must look facts in the eye."

Barrès played with his spoon, wiped the serviette around the plate: "Inconceivable, how the entire great German army marches in such a spirit back to its homeland. What will they get up to. We must remain dreadfully armed."

The Lorrainer began to eat: "Why think so far ahead. A lot may turn out differently. Developments in Germany. Who has any idea."

Barrès: "I hope they will be weakened for a time by this revolution."

"There, that is also a perspective. And now we should eat."

(3) Fischer vol.2, p.315, Woods p.204

Obscure Goings-on in Cologne on the Rhine

In Cologne on the Rhine, on Monday 2nd December 1918, some elderly men rose from their beds grumpy and still sleepy, made a slow morose business of pulling on socks, yawned, changed their shirt, tugged warm Long Johns over their legs, and felt for trousers.

In order to fasten the braces they sat down again and yawned a while longer lethargically on the edge of the bed. Then they made a decision, and washed and combed with a great deal of snorting and wheezing.

Then they had breakfast and set about their usual work. By midday they were more cheerful, lunch tasted good – two found fault, but ate nonetheless – and two ate without reservation. It all slid down nicely and warmed them a little, so the inevitable happened and they soon sank into a snooze.

The snooze had to be a short one, for they had much to do, and did it. Now and then one of the four telephoned the other three, who paid careful attention one after the other to what he said, and were in complete agreement. Later on two of them abruptly took leave of their wives. The other two were bachelors, and glad to have sorted out their evening.

Around eight o'clock– they had been awake now for twelve hours, if you discount the one-hour lunchtime snooze – the four of them were sat together in the modest simple lodging of one of the bachelors. They still wore the socks they had pulled on that morning. In one case

these had sagged and now hung over the edge of the boot, but he hadn't noticed. Two had fastened the socks with tight rubber bands. They were elderly men, and knew nothing of the newer models that would pour in from the West in massive quantities over the coming years. The fourth man was plump, and each sock clung fast to a sturdy leg, as long as it was new. Later on of course they would loosen and sag. His socks were still holding up well, as the nervous man – it was his apartment – ascertained by means of several discreet glances.

They conversed long and seriously, as was their way and as befitted this late hour when in fact they felt themselves at their perkier. They drank the tea of which the nervous man poured a continuous supply. He had nothing else to offer. None of the men smoked, out of respect for the host's apartment.

Two hours passed, towards the end of which they began slowly to breathe again – something of which they became gradually aware. At the same time they felt warmth in the arms and legs, a heaviness in the head, a painful pressure in the hindquarters that they had burdened for too long already. None of it bothered them. But the conversation was clearly drawing to a close. Before the eyes of all four, like a magic sign, stood a bed and a quiet bedroom.

One after the other they stood up, stretched legs. Then they were near the door, and went.

Back home they opened the door quietly, removed hat and coat, and sat on the edge of the bed to remove outer clothing. They went out once more to attend the call of nature, then crouched on the bed.

Underpants and socks were next. The man whose socks sagged was glad they came off at once. The two with the rubber-band garters were relieved when they were removed, they looked at the welts on the legs and pulled at the rubber bands to make them bigger. The plump man did as he had done since childhood: he massaged one leg with the other to roll the socks down. When it went smoothly he was happy. At the same time it was a sign that he needed to change socks.

All four pulled on nightshirts, settled under the blankets and endeavoured, breathing deeply, contented, to fall asleep.

Lots of images floated through their heads, from the day, the departed day, until they knew no more of themselves and in their sleep, their dreams, went changeable ways that troubled them not at all, some deep, some high, and sometimes conversations happened.

The conversations in the apartment of the nervous bachelor had covered schooling, measures planned by the government, etc.

(4) Fischer vol.2, p.348; Woods p.226.

... Overhead the tall wounded Pharmacist and his wife sat on the sofa with their arms around one another, drinking coffee. She comforted him, and allowed herself some tricks she had never dared before, to which he reacted with indignation. She dipped a rusk into his coffee and made him snap for it. The game made her tremendously happy. It was a child's game she used to play with her younger sisters when she was meant to be feeding them but tormented them instead. Because the child had always to snap higher, she called it the "fish game".

She practised this on her tall husband. She enjoyed it enormously, and it was a condition of his being accepted back into her good graces. He went along with it. He was back, but into what graces. How he had to snap, sitting beside her on the sofa, after the bait that she held now left, now right, before his mouth. She unwound her arm and held the bait higher over him. She laughed, ran away. He caught her in the middle of the room, there ensued an excited romp that she would not allow to get out of hand. She ordered "Enough", put on the spectacles that bobbed on a string and signified Housewife. Then they drank more coffee and looked at one another, he exhausted, lurking, on the offensive, she in a defensive trench, behind the barbed wire entanglement of a conversation about housekeeping. ...

(5) Fischer vol.2, p.359; Woods p.233.

A Westphalian snuffles around in Berlin

While our jaunty General was still sitting in the Major's office⁵ and working there – meaning, showing his general's uniform – he was not a little astonished, but certainly little pleased, to receive another refugee from the Alsatian garrison town that he used to rule over: the former garrison Pastor. The jaunty General absolutely did not relish being greeted by someone as his companion in sorrow. But the clerical gentleman was enormously happy. He almost flung his arms around the General, and when this proved not possible, instant patriotic tears too drew no reaction. In due course he could no longer fail to notice the old man's complete indifference, and he addressed him with a few consoling words.

The General's face darkened, he retreated behind a desk and asked: "What is your business here, you? Aren't you from Westphalia? Taking a little look around the capital? Widows' balls and so on. Left the wife at home?"

In earlier times the General would never have directed such questions at a pastor, but now it was just the way he was.

The Pastor came to attention: "I intend, General, and this is the purpose of my visit, to place myself at your disposal. When the ship is sinking, all hands must come on deck."

"Sinking, that's good," the General laughed, "now that we're all of us drowned already. Sir, have you not noticed?"

Now the Westphalian realised the difficulty of the case. He had come here as if called. He unleashed his whole armoury of clerical devices with remarks now grave, now reproachful, now admonishing. This had the effect of causing the General, from his position behind the desk, to regard him with some amusement. Before it became clear to the Westphalian that he had, so to speak, brought the house down, the Major stepped in, the General was happy to hand his visitor over, and now the scene changed.

Major and Pastor engaged in a lengthy round of pensive handshaking. An extensive discussion followed. Yes, the Pastor wished to place himself fully and totally at their disposal. But he just said this. It wasn't full and total. For the private interests of the clerical visitor were also entangled in the matter. These concerned the furniture he had left behind in the garrison town, and now he was stuck in Westphalia and had no way to retrieve it.

⁵ Continues from a scene in *Citizens & Soldiers* ch. 20. The Pastor's adventures began in ch. 8.

The furniture, and how he could retrieve it and his books, had in the last few weeks become an *idée fixe*. His wife scolded him, in a manner scarcely tolerable even for one of Christian patience, for not having noticed in time that it was all over and so not having gone looking for a furniture van and a week earlier there were lots of vans to be had or he could at least have brought the silver and the jewellery boxes and the jewellery with him.

Oh, the Pastor felt his guilt, and to the extent possible poured oil on the waves of the raging wifely soul. He had at that time, more's the pity, spent the last days before the collapse in a state of mindless melancholy, and only when it was too late and he emerged from it did he confide his dire need to a lieutenant's widow. But then all the talk and the general hullabaloo around them completely drove the furniture problem from his mind. In the panic he'd given no thought to silver and jewellery. The widowed female had suggested that his only duty (the Pastor's wife being long since back in Westphalia) was as her protector. And so he'd gone with her to Strassburg. But he daren't divulge this to his wife, and why when you're already a sinner cause another already suffering creature more suffering by confessing that sin. And he'd sat drinking with the lieutenant's widow in the Aubette, then let her lead him astray to a music café across Kleber Place, to dance with her. Yes, all true and hard to believe: in those days of darkest calamity, with the Fatherland lost and his furniture now booty for the enemy, he had gone dancing in Strassburg with a saucy first lieutenant's widow, in a public venue.

Now he had come to Berlin. He did not, as he had feared, relive any of his atrocious behaviour in Strassburg, and the name Strassburg was now synonymous with Den of Iniquity. He had come to Berlin firstly in order to evade for a few weeks the enfiling domestic fire, and secondly to check out the possibility that in Berlin, the centre of events, he might perhaps find a way to retrieve his possessions. There must be someone in Berlin who would know how to travel through neutral foreign territory and make contact with the janitor couple in the small town to whom, before he left, he had entrusted his apartment.

His wife, unencumbered by legal niceties, berated him for placing unreliable janitor people at the head of the household. For she considered them unreliable, and alas had good reason. For they had already discovered the pastor's wife's jewellery hidden in the sideboard under a pile of serviettes, and at the moment the only piece of value, a necklace, graced the neck of the mother of a liquor dealer in Schiltigheim, to whom it had been offered at a favourable price.

Being so poor, the Pastor accepted an invitation from an unmarried colleague and friend from student days to stay with him in the east of the city. The Pastor now lived there in the grey monotonous wilderness of buildings, where he was afflicted with something like fear and seasickness. He was looking for open receptive faces, and encountered only grim denizens of the big city, and his own project made no progress. But he could not decide to go home.

He did receive one happy piece of news from the colleague he was staying with. In the parish there dwelled an elderly lady very active in Christian welfare, a Frau Becker, whose son had been in action and was now back home seriously wounded. And if I'm not mistaken, the Pastor thought, this Frau Becker's son lay latterly in that Alsatian military hospital and was transported back here. How happy the Pastor was. He had only the haziest memory of this badly wounded first lieutenant, had seen him only once or twice early on, had never managed to speak to him. But now he really wanted to head over and see Frederick Becker. He had to postpone the visit: Becker's mother, whom he was able to contact quite quickly, proved very reluctant. She wanted to spare her son this visit, and said that Frederick was still too ill.

(6) Fischer vol.2, p.391; Woods p.242.

THE BRINGERS OF ORDER

Some men in Cologne discreetly threaten that the Rhineland will renounce.

A general in Kassel also thinks of threatening, but will first sleep on it.

The men in Cologne have come this far

The men in Cologne had come this far.

Each had, in his own way, stuffed socks into boots, braces were in their place, waistcoats sat buttoned, and watch chains with their trinkets dangled. Each had to check that the tie was neatly knotted, and the general appearance – not pretty, but that was of no consequence these days – was grave, ponderous, as the situation demanded.

Once again they placed feet in boots, bent to tie laces. There. Makes the face red, brings colour to the cheeks. Nicely shaved? So-so, it'll do. Nothing to be done about hairs in the ears.

And now, for God's sake, to arms! On with coat, hat, umbrella. It must and shall happen.

Two climb with wife and big children – for youth too must be in attendance – into the tram, which conveys them with the desired despatch to their destination. The third man lives close by the destination. So he goes on foot, conscious of his superiority, slows down later, collar turned up, two streets to his goal. He had no need to drum up courage. He was certain of the outcome.

The men met as agreed downstairs in the brightly lit building with the restaurant business. A mean little room had been reserved for them, containing six chairs and a coat stand. They were pleased to find themselves all here, to shake hands even before removing their coats. They kept coats on, because the room was unheated. Whether upstairs was heated would, they all agreed, be confirmed later.

Yes, they had reached this point, thanks to their own efforts and the dauntless spirit of sacrifice demanded by the times, which, having hauled November along day by day like a coalman, now sidled unwearied up to December and had already arrived at the fourth evening. The three men acknowledged this with great appreciation, and felt themselves well served.

They moved about full of confidence in the mean little space that today was called the Committee Room. They were aware of sensations to which normally they paid no attention – under the shoulders, in the legs, the back. They had a constant feeling that the tie was slipping.

There were noises outside of people arriving, chatter, laughter, shouts. Cars drove up.

"Lots of people," a voice spoke into the room, "must be hundreds."

Two of them beamed. The third stood by the coat stand trying to write on his knee. The other two, doing nothing but freeze and stamp their feet, took pity and handed him a fountain pen and a briefcase to lean on. He accepted these. In doing so he opined that it was dratted dark for writing; but there was nothing they could do about it and it wasn't their fault. They regarded with bemusement the tiny gas flame that seemed about to go out at any moment. One said: "They're saving."

The other whispered: "It'll do, for a Committee Room."

The third man was under no obligation to accept their prompting to write, but he considered it as a point of honour, and wrote.

Now came the mighty clang of a bell. The three men looked at one another. They debated hastily whether to leave coats and hats here, but decided to go up first and take them off there.

On the stair they heard from youngsters that upstairs was heated. They dithered. Then the youngsters helped them off with their coats, which they carried back downstairs.

The three men – slightly dazzled, timid, ingratiating, ill at ease – stepped into the room. They were greeted with loud cheers and applause. The room was indeed heated.

Five more grave gentlemen were already sitting at the committee table. Handshakes were exchanged. Now the men could sit. It had happened. No more twinges in the legs, under the shoulder. They simply sat, waited, and were there.

As one of the five gentlemen made a speech, roaring, waving his arms, the three men felt more at ease, and were occupied with staring ahead, moving the head from side to side, which was easy enough to do but offered no new perspectives.

But then gradually the tie regained its function, and fingers made their familiar way to the throat to tug and twitch. They stared straight ahead.

Then it was their turn, and each of them said something.

One after the other, beneath a massive wave of handclapping, they sank back onto the chair and kept quite still. They just sweated.

It was the crisis, the outbreak of sweating. They were on the mend, were saved.

As they wiped their faces they regarded one another. They hadn't imagined it like this. Now they felt thoroughly at ease. They spotted their relations and youngsters in the hall. And suddenly it was all over.

Down there everyone stood up with lots of shouting. The podium was stormed, and they had to respond to questions. Shoulders were clapped, congratulations offered. It was amazing, honestly. They'd never intended this.

Only the one with the slip of paper was all in a tizzy and declared as they went down the stairs: it had gone exactly as he'd intended. They were happy to go along with that.

The resolution the man with the slip of paper had read out was a protest against Berlin's plans for schools, and mumbled something about the Rhineland renouncing.

Then, back in the Committee Room, all felt in their backsides the after-effects of sitting on rough wicker chairs. One limped and complained of pins and needles in his leg. All three, as they stood with coats and hats out in the street breathing fresh night air, said: "Thank God."

And having had their fill, they all betook themselves off home as quickly as possible and crawled into bed. Those who had attended the meeting did likewise.

(7) Fischer vol.2, p.433; Woods p.271.

Maurice Barrès is depressed

During these days a young couple from Strassburg, the Kössels, were staying in Paris, French at last. They had an old love for Paris, and now an understandable desire to take their new status for a stroll in the centre of France and discover who they really were.

In Paris they found a sombre and strangely mixed mood: no rejoicing, no real excitement or relief, doubts and anxieties about the progress of the Peace Talks, and inexpressible sorrow for all the losses. Political antagonisms buried during the war now came into the open.

The young Kössels sought out Barrès. He had visited them, his loyal admirers, a short while before in Strassburg.⁶

Barrès was working up lectures on the Celto-Roman Spirit and its spread along the Rhine. When they arrived he greeted them with the greatest cordiality. But his temples were now hollow, his mouth slack. "I am drained," he confessed, "I write this, but I'm playing the ostrich."

They were struck by his dejection.

"Have you looked around Paris, spoken to people, who, what do you hear, great joy, hopes, what? Well now, they have reason to rejoice."

Frau Kössel: "Why do you not?" The human weakness of this sparkling beloved spirit distressed her.

Barrès: "You know that Rostand⁷ has died. He was at the Armistice talks here in Paris. As Clemenceau drove up he climbed onto the car's footplate. That's how he got in. A few days later he was gone. He died as he wished. They found a poem on him. Listen: 'I wish only to see victory. Ask me not: what next? Next I wish for black night, a sleep beneath cypresses. Then I have nothing more to hope for and nothing more to suffer. Vanquished, I could not have gone on living. As victor – I can die.'"

After a silence, Barrès added: "That was Rostand. Blessed be his memory. Who could match him."

He rifled silently through the pile of manuscripts in front of him and drew out two sheets of newspaper stapled together. "Someone sent me this. Articles from the *Daily News* and the *Star*. You could do worse than read them. What are they about? An English military critic, formerly a general, Sir Maurice⁸, expresses himself on the victory. He takes us by the ears, this gentleman, he really does. You see, if it was only the usual English carping about us, we could brush the matter aside with all the rest. But this is more, it concerns victory itself. Whether the Allies and Foch actually achieved victory. You are surprised. That's how far we have come."

Kössel: "I don't understand. Who is this Sir Maurice?"

"Not just anybody. He is well in with Lloyd George. During the War he was Director of Military Operations in the War Office, was then dismissed, I don't know why. He informs us bluntly that the German Army was not beaten by Foch, it simply fell apart. Almost by itself,

⁶ Described in *Citizens & Soldiers*, ch. 29.

⁷ Edmond Rostand (1868-1918): Author of *Cyrano de Bergerac*. He died on 2 December.

⁸ Sir Frederick Maurice (1871-1951): he was sacked for publicly accusing Lloyd George of misleading Parliament.

from internal causes. The German Army, he says, was on the day of the Armistice no way inferior to the Allies in either numbers or other military aspects. But German discipline, their slave morality, could not withstand the test. 'The discipline of free men overcame the discipline of slaves', he says, word for word. And here, underlined by me – one moment, I shall translate: 'An army cannot fight without a nation behind it. Since the courage of the German nation had been thoroughly worn down, army and navy both collapsed.'

Kössel: "For God's sake, what is he driving at?"

Barrès cast a long slow look over him: "Dear friend! I hope he does not know. It would surpass all imagination if it turns out he does know. He robs Foch and all the Allies of their wonderful victory. He negates (heed me now) he negates our very own victory. The Germans collapsed for a reason quite independent of us. Nothing to do with the Foch offensive of 18th July, with Ludendorff's black 8th August and so on. The German Army remained undefeated."

Resignedly he shoved the sheets back under his pile of manuscripts. "What more could the Germans want? It's actually an invitation to the Germans to start up again at a favourable moment. We need not expect a war of revenge, as I had feared, but a continuation, after a period, of this same war, once the hinterland has been cleansed. Our defeat is already certain."

Frau Kössel looked back and forth between Barrès and her husband: "You exaggerate, Monsieur Barrès. Admit it. That is not the actual point of the article."

Barrès bowed: "I am afraid, dear lady."

Kössel rubbed his brow: "No preliminary peace treaty has yet been concluded. We don't even know the terms of the peace treaty. This article must serve a certain political stance. You said Lloyd George is there behind this Maurice."

"Close by, at any rate." Barrès smiled, he was visibly more relaxed and cheerful. His young guests saw the warrior awaken: "But why do I talk of this to you, my friends? You must think me a hysteric. We have won a victory. Not, thank God, on paper, but in reality, at the hands of Marshal Foch. Apart from which – your presence here is the proof."

Frau Kössel said: "The Allies won, and we shall remain French. Of this I am certain."

Kössel smiled, Barrès kissed her hand: "Charmed, Madame."

"Ah," he sighed then, "these Germans are like Hans in Luck.⁹ Everything falls in place to favour them. They have caused us so much suffering. Then on our side appears this President Wilson and hands over his Fourteen Points. They are his conditions; they have to be accepted. Now they almost treat them as their own peace conditions, held out to us. Then following on their defeat, on their palpable and obvious military catastrophe, they have a revolt, and look, they blare out that it was revolution that ended the war and denied them their victory."

Frau Kössel: "But please, Monsieur Barrès, nobody in Germany or elsewhere could believe such a thing."

Barrès stiffened his easy posture and spoke as softly as he always did when deadly serious: "Not believe it? The Germans won't believe it? Not believe that their Hindenburg and Ludendorff remain undefeated? Madame, they have not deviated for one second from this belief, and they will grow ever stronger in their belief."

⁹ Grimm's Tales #83.

Kössel: "But let's leave them to it. We have the actual victory."

Barrès frowned, doodled with the pencil and said quietly: "Right. Like I myself, you have the notion that to every victor belongs a vanquished. But a guilty person must first be condemned. He must admit his deed. Or the evidence must force him to it."

Kössel: "Well, that's what they're doing."

Barrès cut him off with a weary gesture: "Let's drop it. First came Wilson with his lovely ideal very difficult demands, and now the other allies, the English, to make our lives easier after this bitter war that has laid waste to our land. Oh, our wonderful Marshal Foch. How I grieve for him."

And then Barrès laughed a hearty youthful laugh: "A strange folk, these English. Even during the war their generals never believed they had won. You had to take them by the nose. Now they cannot forgive Foch for winning in 1918, because their thesis was that victory would not come until 1919, with the entry of millions of Americans. So I would like to make a concrete proposal: we hold back with our joy, wait for the entry of these armies, but then we shall win, really, pitilessly, without mercy and with no possibility of misunderstanding."

They turned to personal matters. Frau Kössel's delicacy and tenderness towards Barrès, now restored to cheerfulness, delighted her husband.

(8) Fischer vol.3, p.11; Woods p.310.

... ailing motherland.

It was in the year 1620, shortly after the outbreak of the destructive and depopulating Thirty Years War, that English Puritans determined to show their backs on this continent that knew only unfreedom and greed, and set themselves down in the distant land across the water.

In November 1620 a storm drove their vessel the *Mayflower* onto the granite coast of Massachusetts. Already they sensed the need to formulate what they wanted, namely "in the presence of God and none other than God to combine ourselves for the furtherance of certain ends." A month later, on 23 December, they founded the town of Plymouth. They undertook, in a contract signed by every Pilgrim Father, to enact "just and equal laws as shall be meet for the general good of the Colony, unto which we promise all due Submission and Obedience." And however hard the beginning might be, they would train their eyes on the lasting betterment of their society.

They were people who adhered to the Christian religion. From this they drew their feeling for a life of responsibility requiring total independence, and no state power should lead them astray from their practice thereof.

The Plymouth colonists entered into alliance with other colonists, and concluded a treaty of federation with them. The colonies grew, and in 1754 devised a plan for union. It was the great Jefferson, whose pure will overshadowed the triumph of many a war hero as a single angel's wing the abysses of Hell, who drafted the Declaration of the United Colonies:

"The respect we owe to our great Creator, the principle of humanity, the voice of the general opinion, must convince all who reflect upon them that government is instituted for the welfare of humanity and must be regulated with this goal in mind."

Let anyone who reads this say that religion is an opiate, and that from it the profoundest human pride cannot grow.

In 1776 representatives of the thirteen United States, descendants of those Pilgrim Fathers now lying in the earth, declared: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.—That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed."

So splendidly had those seeds sprouted which, eighteen hundred years earlier, God had scattered on Palestine, a land under the violent rule of the Roman Caesar. It was left to a German philosopher in the nineteenth century to teach that Christianity initiated a slave uprising, and so distorted the face of humanity that only the "blond beast" could save it.

But the American Declaration opened proudly: "We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America."

Later they would not tolerate the secession of any part. One of their great Presidents, Andrew Jackson, in 1832 directed a declaration at South Carolina:

"The Constitution of the United States then forms a government not a league. It is a government in which all the people are represented, which operates directly on the people individually, not upon the States. No State has the right to secede. To say that any State may at pleasure secede from the Union is to say that the United States are not a nation."

And so Lincoln defended unity.

Woodrow Wilson ...

(9) Fischer vol.3, p.344; Woods p.516.

Anny and René seek mutual consolation¹⁰

Around this time lonely Frau Scharrel lay sighing in her lovely Paris apartment. She felt impelled to the cemetery, to visit Bernhard's grave. She prayed. And then she went back to bed to recover, in order to succumb once more to her sweet lascivious thoughts.

Her two nieces have clearly benefitted from their stay in Paris. The twins dream of returning soon, and Frau Scharrel suspects that they both experienced more than they let on. Yes, I know, it's youth, the body in bloom, but she is no longer blooming.

She thought often of Hilde, with mixed emotions. She knew nothing of Becker, she assumed Hilde had extricated herself from the snares of the obsolete affair with Bernhard and would now enjoy new and lovely experiences in Berlin. How she envied Hilde – and hated her. Bernhard had already become Anny's property, he suited her taste, and what's more, how nice, a relative. Hilde had broken in on her placid joy, stolen Bernhard away – and was the real

¹⁰ Continues the storyline from Woods p.268-275.

cause of Bernhard's death. Hilde had once again dragged the now gentle and pliable Bernhard away, and then callously thrown him aside. And now she had run away to Berlin.

The curate, her confessor, helps her and admonishes her. She keeps busy with her legal cases and waits for Life to cast new shiny shells and colourful stones onto the beach. To discuss one of her cases, the old Procurator from the little not so distant town turns up at Frau Scharrel's. His kindly manner and good cheer does her good. He is jovial, and for good reason, and when they come to speak of personal matters tells her quite naturally of the miracle of his son's reappearance. Tears spring to her eyes as she hears this, she recalls her fallen elder son, and another who has been torn away. The old Procurator notices the tears, he knows her history, and when he next visits he brings her the unexpected pleasure of his son's company – the young man is stationed here with his unit. Frau Scharrel invites René to tea that afternoon.

She is amazed, as was the Procurator, at the young warrior's earnestness. Ah, how differently they return than when they set off. There'll be a new world once they are all back. Let's hope it won't be too wild.

We know the tastefully furnished rooms of this apartment. We watched Hilde looking for Bernhard again after fifty-five months away. Young René sits in his uniform by the black marble fireplace under the mirror. There's a porcelain vase on the mantelpiece, it's painted, muscular men from antiquity throw balls to one another.

Frau Scharrel has a full dark-complexioned face. It is narrower than it was four weeks ago. Her chestnut hair is combed high, parted in the middle, a few grey hairs can be seen in the waves, she knows they add to her attractions and makes no effort to conceal them. A yellow silk scarf is draped loosely at her throat. She sits in a red armchair next to the little tea-trolley with its teapot and cups, and on the lower shelf little cakes and cigarettes. She has a sturdy bust, the black dress clings, a white lace collar lies on her shoulders.

René crosses his legs in their black leather spats. He is unfamiliar with such a situation, taking tea on his own with an elegant society lady. He was too young for such things when he went off to war.

She asks about his home town, and how he managed to return. And when the heart is full, the mouth runs over, and so he tells her, staring before him – she studies the sleek dark-blond skull as he keeps his head down – he tells of the affair with the tinsmith Jund. There was a man who deserted the town with him and never came back; he's his Doppelgänger. – Why Doppelgänger?

Now René comes out with his secret, of which his people back home know nothing. Well, back in August 1914, when he went across, he too left behind someone with a dress and long hair. He thought of her all through the war, but of course had no way to write to her. She was the daughter of a German schoolteacher.

“And?”

“Her father's gone across the Rhine, taking her with him. But she left a letter for me with a girlfriend, in case I should ever come back – she brought me the letter just last week. She writes: greetings, wishes me all the best, but of course she's going off with her father. And she's engaged to a teacher, a war-wounded man she got to know.”

“Hm.”

“Frau Scharrel, don’t think I’m unhappy about it. For who knows how we might have related to one another after four and a half years.”

Frau Scharrel: “After four years, and especially years like these, everything looks quite changed.”

René: “Anyway, about the tinsmith Jund. I knew the stationery shop owner Kauss in our town very well¹¹. The husband has still not returned, up to this day. His wife let Jund make advances to her, and at first I was terribly enraged because the woman couldn’t wait and was to some extent assuming his death. I actually thought of intervening, on behalf of my friend.”

Frau Scharrel, inwardly amused, arms spread wide on the arms of the chair, said: “Well, what happened?”

“I confronted them right away, as soon as I came back and wasn’t aware how things stood. I gave the wife a piece of my mind. She cried so much it almost frightened me. She thought her husband must have sent me, he must be following hard behind, and I let her go on thinking that. There must have been loads of howling and teeth-chattering in the days that followed. Well, then the letter from my former girl friend was brought to me, and because I had no one to talk to about it, and I was in such a state, I went to Frau Kauss to take out my anger on her. She was just the same, she literally went out of her mind when she saw me. She thought her husband would be back next day, and was in total despair, and I was to stand by her and she showed me her little child to soften me up.”

“A little child? Whose was it?”

“Her husband’s, Kauss, who else?”

Frau Scharrel shrugged: “How old is it?”

“It was lying in the cot.”

Frau Scharrel: “Maybe it was very small?”

“Yes, very small, a baby. Ha, I never thought of that. You think the baby is the tinsmith Jund’s?”

“That’s exactly why the woman showed you the child. She wanted you to take pity on her because of the child.”

René, astonished at himself, shook his head: “It never dawned on me. But even so I didn’t do anything to her.”

“And because your own flame is away and no longer your concern, you spared this woman.”

The soldier sat there, grave, half boy, half man, thinking how to answer.

“I thought, there’s enough misery in the world already, my own mother passed away while I was gone, I really don’t want to add to it.”

They sat and smoked cigarettes in silence. Frau Scharrel felt truly grateful for the dispensation this young man brought into her home, scaring away the evil spirits that still disported themselves there. If only he’s not soon redeployed elsewhere.

¹¹ See note 2 above. Döblin has now recovered his memory of these characters!

They began to chat. He had lots to tell about the Foreign Legion. She heard about the Spaniards who served in the Legion during the War. There were over ten thousand of them, famous people, among them students and writers. René told how he had stood in a trench on the Somme next to Pujulà I Vallès, a writer. He spoke of Pere Ferrès-Costa,¹² another Catalan, who brought a whole unit of Catalans to the Front, they were at Amiens and Arras, and in 1915, during the advance, many Spaniards were left lying, Ferrès-Costa among them.

René felt in his breast pocket and pulled a crumpled scrap of paper from his wallet. It was the beginning of a madrigal written by Costa, a song to Santa Catarina. René read the first lines: “Si gosava, Catarina, us faria una canço, mes ja se que ma complanta no us agradaria, no.”

René had learned a little Spanish, and loved the Catalan spirit of freedom. He hummed a tune they had sung later, at Verdun: “You shall not pass, and if you were pass through it would be to a heap of ashes. *No pasaren*. They earned lots of medals. One regiment got seven Palms and a Légion d’honneur.”

Smooth and beardless, with not a wrinkle, was René’s tanned face. Little pouty lines ran down from the corners of the lower lip. The chin was soft, but the young man had a defiant way of tossing back his head and jutting the chin; she thought: it’s still soft. But his hands, strangely, were very strong and bony. And as he spoke of medals in the IVth Army, his voice echoed the steely roar of the trenches, and his eyes took on an unexpectedly cold glint.

She said: “We had a soldiers’ and workers’ council here.”

“Pah,” he said, “they were copying the Russians. We shall rid the world of war.” Again he jutted his weak chin. She was worried that if he were suddenly to ball his fists and bang them on the table, the teapot would fall off. René concluded: “Wilson will soon be in France. We’ll see from there what’s to happen next.”

She looked into her cup, stirred the tea. “You young people – are you also a little religious?”

He answered gravely: “People have duties now. When I think of those poor Spaniards who fought alongside us, I’m ashamed to own anything and sit here drinking tea with you. Truly, if we leave things as they were in the world, we’d be common tricksters.”

He felt at ease. Who was this woman? His mother, his girl friend? She found him childish and delightful in his dispassion. To establish how religious he was, she came to mention a marvellous story told by people here concerning the Chief Rabbi of Lyon, Abraham Bloch. He was a man over fifty, serving with the frontline troops. In a battle a soldier beside him was hit. The rabbi held out a crucifix to the man, who was Catholic, and as he did so he himself was brought down by a bullet.

Curiously, all René said was: “Bloch? I had a friend in Gebweiler, a famous footballer, who was called Bloch.”

She nodded: “You knew him?”

“Why, what became of him? I saw him briefly once, afterwards, but might be mistaken.”

Frau Scharrel: “His forename was David, from Gebweiler?”

“What happened to him? Fallen?”

¹² Pujulà (1877-1962): Catalan writer and fervent Esperantist. Ferrès-Costa (1888-1915).

She glanced to the side: "Firing squad."

"What?!"

"He was a daredevil."

René, breathless: "He stood with us."

"He had himself flown in behind German lines, to gather intelligence."

"They caught him?"

"My gardener told me. It was months ago. My gardener knew the young man."

As René sat and his face twitched – she was watching him – a plan developed in her. She had lost her son. What would it be like to draw this young man to her? Put him in the dead boy's place. I could be his auntie, his godmother.

When darkness fell they went out and watched a play. It was a comedy.
