

MARIE VON EBNER-ESCHENBACH
THE VICTORY OF A TENACIOUS WILL.

by

Doris M. Klostermaier

A thesis presented to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
University of Manitoba
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree
Doctor of Philosophy

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THE VICTORY OF A TENACIOUS WILL

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DORIS M. KLOSTERMAIER

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of the University of Manitoba
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Winnipeg, September 30, 1993

Doris M. Klostermaier

"Not what we experience, but how
we feel about what we experience,
constitutes our fate"

List of Abbreviations

- AW Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach, "Altweibersommer," Erzählungen. Autobiographische Schriften. Vol. 3. Winkler, 1978.
- BI Anton Bettelheim, Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach. 1900
- BII Anton Bettelheim, Marie von Ebner-Eschenbachs Wirken und Vermächtnis. 1920
- BC Robert A. Kann, ed. Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach - Dr. Josef Breuer. Ein Briefwechsel.
- BF Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach und Hieronymus Lorm. "Aus Briefen an einen Freund."
- BP Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach, "Betty Paoli."
- DS Die Dioskuren.
- EB Encyclopedia Britannica.
- EETL Jiri Vesely, "Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach und die tschechische Literatur."
- EF Enciclopedia Filosofica
- EG Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach, "Meine Erinnerungen an Grillparzer." Erzählungen. Autobiographische Schriften. Vol. 3. Winkler, 1978.
- ELF Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach, "Louise von François."
- EME Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach, ed. "Aus den Erinnerungen des k.k. Feldmarschall-Leutnants a.D. Moriz Frhrn. Ebner von Eschenbach."
- ESD Jiri Vesely, "Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach, Saar, David: Tschechische Elemente in ihrem Werk und Leben."
- FM Anton Bettelheim, ed. Louise von François und Conrad Ferdinand Meyer.
- HC Ebner-Eschenbach/Heyse correspondence in: Mechtild Alkemade, Die Lebens - und Weltanschauung der Freifrau Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach.
- KL Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach, "Aus meinen Kinder - und Lehrjahren." in Kritische Texte und Deutungen. Vol. 4. Ed. Christa Maria Schmidt.
- MK Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach, "Meine Kinderjahre." Erzählungen. Autobiographische Schriften. Vol. 3. Winkler, 1978.

- NBV Nationalbibliothek, Vienna.
- NÖB Neue Österreichische Biographie
- NDB Neue Deutsche Biographie. Ed. Historische Kommission bei der Bayrischen Akademie der Wissenschaften.
- RV Rathaus, Vienna.
- TBI Karl Konrad Polheim, ed. Tagebücher I
- TBII Karl Konrad Polheim, ed. Tagebücher II
- ZT Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach, "Aus einem zeitlosen Tagebuch."
Erzählungen, Autobiographische Schriften. Vol. 3. Winkler, 1978.

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26. Adolph Dubsky, Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach's brother (Breuer Correspondence 5).
27. Two pocket-watches from Ebner-Eschenbach's collection, now housed in the Uhrenmuseum Wien (From a postcard available at the Uhrenmuseum).
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30. Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach in her middle years (G. Reuter, Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach).
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33. Letter by Turgenev to Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach (RV I.N. 56309).
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35. Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach's coat of arms (NBV, 4. Beilage 593/14).
36. Title page of the first complete edition of Marie Ebner-Eschenbach's works by Paetel. The legend says: "This fascicle can be sure of the warmest welcome, because Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach's novels and

stories are part of the literary heritage of our people".

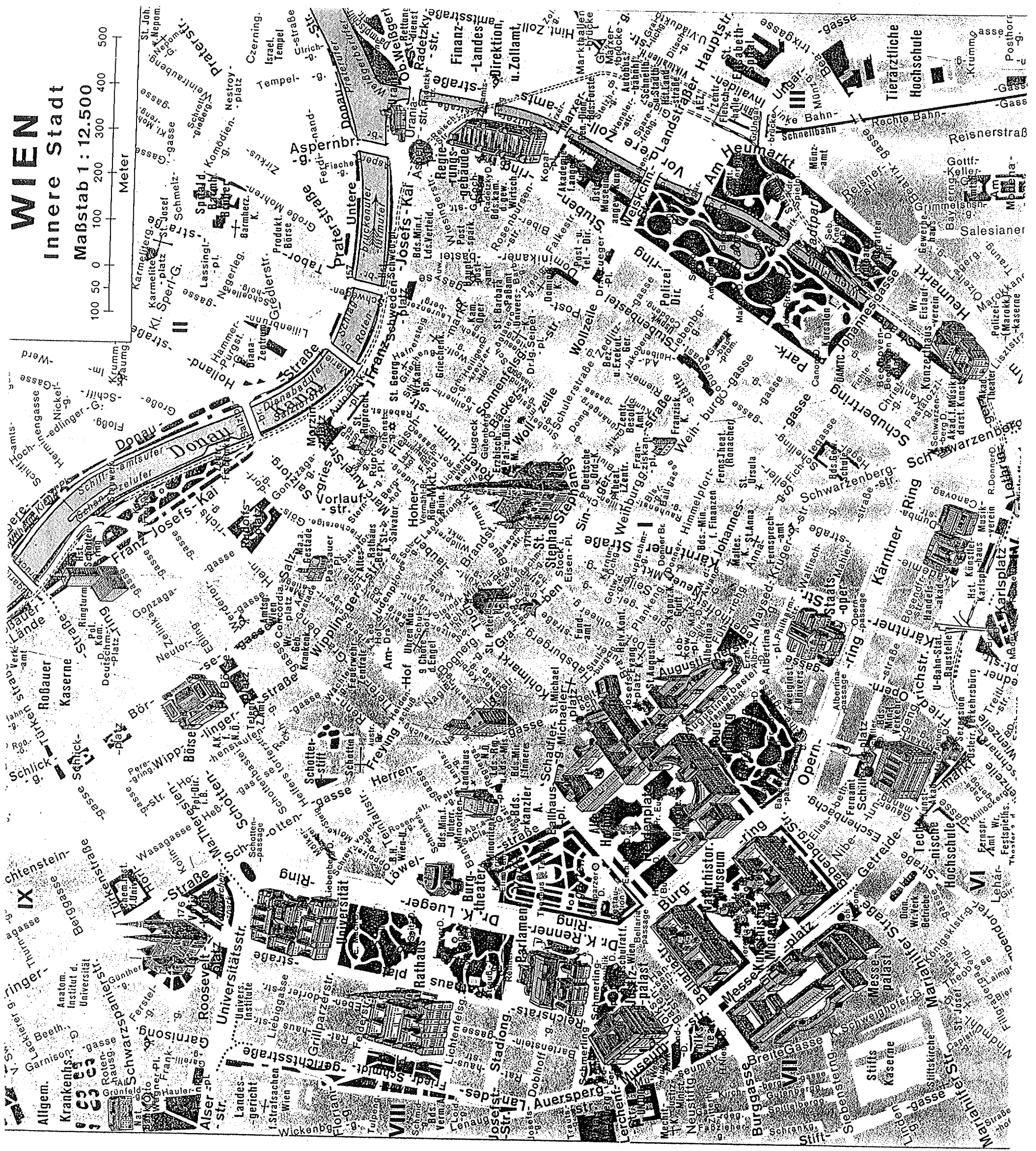
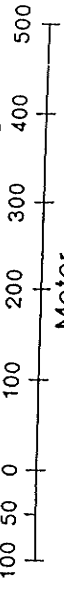
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Map of Inner City Vienna

WIEN

Innere Stadt

Maßstab 1:12.500



The Family Tree of the Dubskys of Trebomyslic

Marie (x 1861) Franziska (x 1863) Elisabeth (x 1864)
oo Maximilian G.
Moy de Sons

INTRODUCTION

The idea for this biography had its genesis several years ago, when I happened to read Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach's statement: "Blessed be my will to suffer! To it I owe my inner peace, my courage in the battle of life, my strength and my vigour" (Vesely 217). This remark aroused my curiosity.

I had studied quite a few of Ebner's works during my high school and university years in Germany and knew that she was considered Austria's most prominent nineteenth-century woman writer. I had also learned in class that she was a member of her country's social elite, that she had had a happy and harmonious marriage and that she had been venerated by the public as a symbol of kindness and compassion. Having lived such a fulfilled life, why did she have to suffer?

From Anton Bettelheim's two biographies of 1900 and 1920 I gleaned the information that Ebner-Eschenbach's goal had been to become a dramatist of note and that, after many failures and disappointments in the theatre world, she resigned herself to writing prose, a genre in which she finally succeeded beyond her most daring dreams. I now saw that, indeed, she had had to suffer and to struggle for her art, and that, due to various obstacles, like family and public prejudice, ailments, and the maliciousness of critics, her life really had been hard.

Ebner-Eschenbach now began to interest me as a person and as a writer. But the longer I read in Bettelheim's biographies in search of Marie Ebner, the true human being, the more it dawned on me that he had presented a statue, an idol, a superwoman, to whom I found it difficult to

relate. I asked myself whether it would be possible to discover, behind the public façade, the private woman with her likes and dislikes, her strengths and weaknesses, her frustrations, sorrows and joys. The more I thought about it, the more I became determined to search for the real Ebner, and one day I decided to write her life.

In his first biography Bettelheim states: "Whoever wants to get to know Marie Ebner's life, will find the most important and most valuable information in her creations. One just has to be able to search for it" (B I 10). And this is what I have set out to do. I gradually realized that Ebner was an exceedingly private person who did not believe in confessional writing. She thought it strange that Grillparzer had revealed intimate details about his private life, and therefore she wholeheartedly approved of the fact that Anna Fröhlich had burned her sister Kathi's diaries, in which she had described her relationship with the great dramatist (EG 916).

Marie Ebner herself destroyed many autobiographical documents when she put her "literary house in order" (qtd. in Schmidt 171) and consigned many manuscripts to death by fire. She demolished many letters and diaries and asked her closest friends, among them Marie Kittl and Louise von François, to burn her correspondence. Ebner held the firm conviction that artists should be understood through their work. In "Lotti, die Uhrmacherin", she points out that the essence of master Fessler, the gifted watchmaker, is clearly reflected in his watches; one has only to look carefully for it (865). And in "Ob spät, ob früh" she has the baroness explain to her son: "You know my disgust with newspaper gossip; half of it should not be read, half of it should not be believed. That is how I

handle it. Kolberg's compositions delight me. From them I draw the information about the man which is precious to me, and the rest I can do without" (398).

Bearing this in mind, I embarked on a careful study of Ebner-Eschenbach's oeuvre, in the hope of catching a glimpse of the inner life of the woman who had been so eager to protect her privacy. I also remembered the following statement by Christopher Gillie in his monograph on Jane Austen: "[A]n imaginative writer lives in his works, and if a reader has only these by which to shape his judgement, he usually has nearly all that is essential" (19).

The first discovery I made was that in quite a few works the writer uses her own name for her female characters. There is a Marie in "Nach dem Tode", a young, serious-minded woman, cultivated, efficient, and her husband's equal in intelligence. She deeply loves him, but he does not reciprocate her affection. He ridicules her compassion with the underprivileged, neglects her and finally leaves her for his personal interests. When he returns after many years, his wife is dead and finally, all too late, he begins to appreciate her. She has left him a daughter, little Marie, a "sad, withered plant" (64), who trembles in fright of her father and only gradually attaches herself to him.

In "Die Unverstandene auf dem Dorfe" we meet a Marie whose parents have obviously had an unhappy marital relationship. She has "an expression of deep sadness in her dark eyes" (531), sees herself as a "pious martyr" (543) and feels like an outsider in her milieu. She further has an inkling "that a creature of her worth may not be happy in this wicked world" (553).

Marie of "Wieder die Alte" is an artistic but rather unattractive, outspoken and radical teenager, the offspring of an aristocratic family in which harmony and serenity are sorely missing. This youngster pesters and challenges her long-suffering governess with tricky questions regarding history and religion. But ultimately, repenting of her cruelty to the helpless woman, she adopts her as her confidante and shares her most intimate secrets with her.

The protagonist of "Unsühnbar", Maria Dornach, likewise artistic and uncompromising in her outlook on life, longs for her early lost mother and, at the mercy of an authoritarian, uncomprehending, overly status-conscious father, burdens herself with guilt and suffering, before she finally finds her true self.

At last, there is a Marie in the story "Im Zauberbann". She has been engaged as a reader in an aristocratic household and comes across as a rather skeptical lady who has a good understanding of literature and a penchant for patronizing people. She does not shy away from voicing her opinion, even at the risk of being at variance with the views of her employers.

I discovered that all these namesakes of Marie Ebner and many other female characters -- like Rosa of Bozena, Paula and Muschi of Zwei Komtessen, Erika of "Die arme Kleine" -- bear a strong resemblance to the portrait Ebner-Eschenbach has painted of herself in her semi-autobiographical story "Die erste Beichte" and in her autobiography Meine Kinderjahre. There she states about conceiving her literary figures: "I elaborated on their colourful plays, their games and their fights; I put myself into them, I was they" (799).

In the same quote she mentions that she identified not only with her female, but also with her male characters, endowing them with her ideals and her longings. I therefore analyzed several male protagonists and also detected in them some of their creator's characteristics. Edinek of "Unverbesserlich" for instance clearly resembles the young Marie Dubsky in his radicalism, his vehemence and his desire to overcome habits, considered repulsive by those around him. Likewise, Dietrich Brand of "Rittmeister Brand", this "fireball" (767) with his deep compassion and his love of children, and Josef of "Die arme Kleine", who hates being tied to the house and makes life difficult for his tutor, both bring the young Marie Dubsky to mind.

My next question was: which of her experiences had Ebner transmitted to her fiction? Her writings reveal that she must have witnessed unhappy marriages at close range and that she had to have been in contact with men of a rather mercurial temperament, easily given to outbursts of anger and wrath. Her autobiography discloses that she felt isolated and little understood in her family, and that she suffered from the fact that children in her time were not taken seriously. Her essay "Aus meinen Kinder-und Lehrjahren" shows her anger at the brutality of the feudal system and at aristocratic condescension and prejudice. It further makes the reader aware that already as a young girl Marie Dubsky tried to assert herself against a repressive society that ridiculed girls with an intellectual bent.

From Bettelheim's biography I knew that she had vented part of her frustrations about her ill-fated dramatic career in the story "Ein Spätgeborener" (B II 148); but were there other far-reaching and profound

experiences she had described in her work? My question was answered when I read Marie Ebner's diaries, especially the ones recently published by K.K. Polheim which, like the excerpts brought out by Jiri Veselý in 1971, disclose information about the writer's life, information she probably thought would never come to the fore.

I now learned about her parents' unhappy marriage, about her father's quarrelsomeness and his way of tyrannizing the family. I found out that in younger years she did not have a high regard for her second stepmother and that her relationship with her was rather cool and formal. I also realized that Moritz von Ebner-Eschenbach did not get along well with his uncle and father-in-law, and obviously, like the latter, had a penchant for being contentious and troublesome. I further became aware that Ebner's marriage was not as happy as she and her husband had made outsiders believe.

A comparison of factual material of her life with episodes in her fiction revealed to me that Ebner-Eschenbach had sublimated personal conflicts by depicting them in her work and thus had liberated herself from her complexes and fears. In "Aus meinen Kinder- und Lehrjahren" Ebner confirms that she had poured the tale of her "endeavours" and her "sufferings" into "the most modest form, the form of the narrative" (KL 279). So far critics have assumed this statement to refer to the story "Ein Spätgeborener"; yet Marie Ebner may in fact have meant all her prose works. Writing in general became therapy for her, a means to come to terms with her life and her environment (Necker 112).

Ebner was a biographer at heart. The goal of her work was, as she put it: "to tell the life history or a piece of the life history of a human

being, whose fate has aroused a particular interest in me" (B II 12).

Unfortunately, her plan to write a biography of the actress Anna Marie Adamberger, neé Jacquet who had deeply impressed her due to her assertiveness toward her authoritarian father, came to nothing. Yet, her reminiscences of Grillparzer, a biographical sketch that may be counted among her best works, show Ebner's remarkable skill in this genre. Her forte was characterization and psychological penetration of the figures she described, and therefore she herself deserves a biography that focusses as much as possible on her inner life.

In 1871 she commented in her diary about Gotthelf's story "Uli der Knecht", remarking that she enjoyed each character in it, especially due to the fact, that she could see him "feel and think" (Vesely 218). A few years later she read a manuscript by Annette von Droste-Hülshoff and admired the writer for being able to breathe "fresh liveliness" into some "hackneyed types" (B II 163). Finally, in "Aus einem zeitlosen Tagebuch" Ebner claimed: "To measure the distances of the stars, to be intimately familiar with their course, to be able to distinguish the colour of their light is not enough -- one also has to be able to hear them sing" (744). In other words, amassing all the facts about my biographee's life was not sufficient. I had to breathe fresh life into her and throw new light on her inner state of being. Outwardly the course of her life was rather uneventful. The drama of her life was mainly private and had to be investigated through isolated incidents and inference.

I now present the first English biography of Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach. It is not the "definite life" but focusses mainly on the writer's inner life, her emotions and psychological struggles. It is meant

as the framework and preliminary groundwork for a later full scale biography. Such a work will require an investigation into the various genres Ebner-Eschenbach employed, a thorough textual analysis of all her works, and a discussion of their ranking in the larger context of nineteenth-century Austrian and German literature. Very desirable and valuable will also be a psycho-linguistic analysis of Ebner's oeuvre.

The last German life of the writer was published seventy-three years ago and needs a revision. Anton Bettelheim, Ebner's authorized biographer, portrayed her according to the conventions of the Romantic biographical tradition. He manipulated documents in order to present his subject according to the feminine and artistic ideal of the time. Both had been advocated by the neo-classicist writer Friedrich Schiller, for whom a woman had to resemble "der lieben Frau Sonne" (B I 155), that symbol of warmth, serenity and healing power, and an artist's personality had to reflect highest purity and perfection. Bettelheim's Ebner-Eschenbach is without fault as a person and as a writer; contemporary readers must have been in awe of the venerable monument he had created.

Marie Ebner eagerly strove to conform to the public image her friends and admirers had fashioned of her. Privately she was a "Gemperlein", a rather pugnacious, outspoken, and uncompromising nature. She united within herself two characteristics that have been described as typically Austrian: a romantic penchant for dreaming, that leads to a constant longing for something indefinite, and a propensity for nagging and criticizing (Lothar 5). She was a delightfully humorous and sarcastic person who probably never said and wrote anything without that certain malice, her friends Enrica von Handel-Mazzetti and Fritz Mauthner

appreciated so much. I have tried to portray the writer with her admirable qualities as well as with her quirks and foibles. My goal has been to illustrate her struggles for self-realization and her victory, due to her talent and persistence.

I have collected as much factual material as possible in order to acquaint the English speaking reader with my subject's life and work and to provide information from German sources, some of which are written in the old Gothic script, a script not even many Germans can decipher nowadays. I have studied all monographs and major essays about Marie Ebner up to 1992 and have perused and photocopied numerous unprinted materials -- unpublished correspondences, note book entries and reviews -- currently held in the two archives in Vienna. I have integrated Marie Ebner's life and work, since I believe they form a unity. I have discussed her major works but focussed especially on Das Gemeindegeld, her most important achievement. I have further dealt with the people who were significant for Ebner's life and career and with the historical events that directly affected and concerned her.

My method combines a chronological with a thematic, associative approach. Part One comprises the years 1830 to 1848. Part Two describes the period from 1849 to 1873. Part Three goes from 1874 to 1883. Part Four begins in 1884 and ends in 1898. Part Five discusses the period from 1899 to 1909, and Part Six covers the time span of 1910 to 1916. Within each part I have proceeded thematically, dealing for instance with Ebner's ailments in one chapter, even though she suffered from them all her life. I have further employed the technique of anticipation and flashback, partly because Ebner-Eschenbach uses these devices in her work, especially in

her autobiography, and partly, because my subject, like all human beings, synthesized in her mind anticipation of future events with memories of the past.

Writing this life I have been mindful of the biographical principle that the subject has to be in the foreground and that everything described in the biography has to relate to her (Maurois). I have been careful not to bury Marie Ebner beneath mounds of facts but rather to recreate her as a lively, thinking and feeling personality. I have tried to show her character through her actions (Hinz). Anecdotes are cited to show her humour, and the quotes from letters and note book entries allow her to speak for herself. I made an effort to see the world through her eyes and to convey her perceptions to the reader. I have further heeded Leon Edel's advice that a biographer, though bound by facts, should still be as imaginative as he pleases in his quest for the hidden life myth, as long as he does not invent his material ("Biography and the Science of Man").

While Anton Bettelheim merely refers to the fact that Ebner's life can be found in her creations, I have gone a step further and shown, by quoting from her work, which experiences and emotions she actually transferred to her fiction. Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach has wrongly been stereotyped as "Dichterin der Idylle" (Reuter), an attribute that has prevented many twentieth-century readers from familiarizing themselves with her work. Kurt Benesch states in the preface to his 1966 fictionalized biography Die Frau mit den hundert Schicksalen, that Ebner now has the reputation of a "sentimental, mawkish soul, to whom one does not concede any special literary talent" (IX). Heidi Beutin in her 1980 essay on Bozena

claims that the name Ebner-Eschenbach usually conjures up memories of the dog story "Krambambuli" and that otherwise the writer's major accomplishments have sunk into oblivion (246).

Marie Ebner's work deserves close investigation, especially in regard to her psychological insights into human nature. Stories like "Uneröffnet zu ver-brennen", "Poesie des Unbewussten", "Ihr Traum", reveal her as a connoisseur of the intricate human psyche. In certain ways Ebner may be linked with George Eliot whose psychological-social novels resemble her own, and with Henry James who, like her, was influenced by Gustav Fechner's philosophy and by Turgenev, the Russian master of the psychological narrative.

As Robert A. Kann has pointed out, Ebner-Eschenbach's correspondence influenced Josef Breuer's thinking (BC 12), and he in turn had a great impact on Sigmund Freud. Long before the latter discussed the phenomenon of the "split ego", Marie Ebner had written her story "Ein Traum", in which an old countess, unable to accept the untimely death of her two dearly beloved grandsons, waits day and night for their return and only in lucid moments admits to herself that they are no longer among the living.

Scholars in America, Austria, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Germany are currently working on research regarding Ebner-Eschenbach's life and work. I have contacted the most notable specialists in the field and have received valuable information, including the family tree of the Dubskys of Trebomyslic. I have also corresponded with Countess Aglae Schönfeld, the great-grand-niece of the writer and have been given much encouragement for my work.

Where not otherwise indicated, I have used the three-volume Winkler edition for the quotations from Ebner's works. All translations are my own, unless otherwise indicated. I have tried to render the German text as literally as possible and as idiomatically as I felt necessary.

For the discussion of the content of Ebner's dramas I had to rely on Moritz Necker's monograph, since the dramas are no longer available. All mottos used in my biography are aphorisms of Ebner-Eschenbach and have been taken from the Reclam edition, from Rieder's Weisheit des Herzens, and from Needler's English translation of some of them.

I am aware that the most authentic materials are Ebner's letters, note book entries and the diary entries that have not been edited by the writer, by her family or by Anton Bettelheim and have been designated "A" in K.K.Polheim's edition. I have, however, also quoted from diary entries, marked as "B", which were revised by Marie Ebner in old age. A comparison of these unedited and edited entries shows that the latter leave out information of a more private nature, but coincide with the original entries in the description of general events.

It is interesting to observe that even in her presumably spontaneous diary notes (version "A") Ebner-Eschenbach is not completely open. She often uses the initials "N.N." instead of revealing people's names and expresses herself ambiguously, especially where she makes disparaging remarks about her second stepmother. The confessional attitude was painful to her. She also assumed that her husband, her "dear old man", would one day read her diaries (TB I 187).

Ebner is not consistent with the spelling of names. She writes Zdislawitz in four different ways: Zdislawitz, Zdislawitz, Zdislavic,

Zdislawitz, and I have chosen the last spelling. She also writes Moritz mostly without "t", Adolph with "f" and Viktor with "c". I have used the spelling of official documents of the time.

In order to recreate my subject's personality and character through my work I have at times employed Ebner-Eschenbach's metaphors, as she has used them in her autobiographical materials and in her fiction. I have described Ebner's childhood and youth quite extensively, not only because I had a lot of material due to her childhood description in her autobiography, but also because she firmly believed that her life had been predetermined in her formative years (MK 792).

Writing this biography has been an enriching and exciting experience. Marie Ebner, being reticent and reserved, held it with her famous music director of "Ob spät, ob früh", who avoids people, "because he cannot pretend" (408). She also maintained that "perfect, unspoiled happiness" could be gained "only in the realm of the imagination" and therefore eagerly strove to keep the outside world at bay (KL 277).

Still, despite and partly because of her elusiveness, Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach has left us a great legacy, not only in her works, but in the very way she conducted her life.

PROLOGUE

"To grow old means to gain vision"

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Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach spent the winter of 1905 in Rome, the city of her dreams. She corrected the galley proofs of her autobiography, Meine Kinderjahre, which now appeared insignificant to her beside the mighty symphony of the Eternal City with its grandiose and awe-inspiring past.

Yet, as trivial as her own life-story may have seemed to her, compared to Rome's monumental war-torn history, she was aware that she, too, had fought a long and valiant battle and that she, too had won her victories. At seventy-five, as a highly acclaimed writer, she now could explore her roots and the sources from which she had been able to draw strength. With the sharpened perception of old age, which allowed her to focus on significant moments that stood out in the steady flow of a long career, she thus returned to the origins of her life and her work, her country estate Zdislawitz.

Her whole being was tied to this place. It was the soil that had nourished her ancestors and that connected her with them. It embodied the matrix in which her talent had grown and developed.

As a child she had explored every part of the extensive park of Zdislawitz; she had known every tree and every shrub and had received inspirations for her dreams and her stories. She had returned to her "old nest" time and again not only in her yearly migrations from Vienna, but also in her dreams and her reminiscences. Many of the places she had described under different names were slightly changed descriptions of Zdislawitz.

Like her forebears she was attached to the soil, a sacred trust to be cultivated and to be passed on to future generations. Zdislawitz was more than a place, it was a state of mind, a movable environment she always carried with her, a symbol for a world that knew suffering, pain and death, but which was ultimately redeemed and made whole again. Her goal was to immortalize it in her work, to preserve a way of life inherited from her ancestors, and to share it with her readers as a common spiritual home.

Her maternal great-grandfather, Anton Valentin Kaschnitz von Weinberg was elevated to the baronetcy in 1786. In 1789 Emperor Joseph II made him an Imperial Counsellor and awarded him with the estate Zdaunek in recognition of his services for the country. After his retirement Baron Kaschnitz became a prominent gentleman farmer in the area of Zdislawitz and was recognized among professionals for his contributions to improvement in the field of agriculture and live stock breeding. He was especially renowned for his expertise in sheep breeding and his flock was known far and wide (Wurzbach, vol. 9, 21). His daughter Marie married Baron Siegmund von Vockel, whose family, belonging to the service nobility, originated from Saxony.

Siegmund's grandfather, Johann Paul Vockel a lawyer with a doctoral degree, was auditor general at the Polish-Saxon court and in 1741 received the title of privy councillor. He was elevated to the nobility in 1746 and became a baron in 1749. He retired to Vienna where he died in 1766. Siegmund's father, Friedrich Siegmund von Vockel, was a general and became an envoy of the County of Hesse-Darmstadt at the Imperial Court

of Vienna. He was married to the daughter of Imperial Privy Councillor Freiherr von Moll.

Baron Siegmund von Vockel grew up in Vienna and received his education at the Theresianum, founded by Empress Maria Theresia as a high school for the social elite. After his graduation he embarked on an educational trip through Germany, as was customary for young men in his circles. In 1795 he moved to Saxony to take charge of the country estate Manschatz which he had inherited from his parents. Yet, life far from Austria was not to his taste. He decided to move back to the country where he had grown up and had put down his roots. Upon the advice of a friend, Baron Ferdinand von Geisslern, the owner of a country estate in Hostitz, Siegmund von Vockel devoted himself to the study of agriculture, a field in which he came to excel. In 1800, after his marriage to Baroness Marie Kaschnitz von Weinberg, Friedrich Siegmund von Vockel bought the estate Zdislawitz from his father-in-law. Soon after, Vockel became a member of an association for the advancement of forestry, agriculture and cattle breeding. All the gentlemen farmers and owners of the manors of Littenschitz, Hostitz, Zborowitz, Zdaunek, Napagedl and others were members of this association, founded in the eighteenth century and especially renowned as one of the best sheep-breeder associations in Austria (Wurzbach, vol. 51, 122).

When Vockel bought his estate he knew that his future lay in livestock breeding. Grain growing was no longer profitable because of the huge imports from America. In a short time he increased the herd of three hundred and fifty sheep bought from Baron Kaschnitz to a herd of sixteen hundred of the finest quality. He annually sold up to three hundred

female sheep to all parts of the monarchy, as well as to Prussia, Saxony and Mecklenburg. Sheep breeding became his passion. Once asked why he kept his sheep in such a luxurious stable he replied: "With this stable I express my gratitude to these animals and I return part of what they earned for me. My heir will more gladly take over a beautiful stable than a bad one" (ibid).

Vockel also introduced improvements in the areas of cultivation and production of cattle feed and in the enhancement of soil productivity. He ordered the draining of wetlands and constructed useful buildings on the estate. He enlarged the living quarters in the manor house and embellished the park and the orchard. As a member of the Mährisch-Schlesische Landwirtschaftsgesellschaft Vockel regularly wrote articles on sheep breeding and became a widely known consultant on the subject. When Counts Salm and Auersperg approached him in 1816 to cooperate with them in founding a provincial museum in Brünn, Baron Vockel collected the funds and made a donation of a collection of thirteen thousand maps of the area inherited from his mother's family.

In his personal life Baron Vockel experienced great tragedy. His young wife died in childbirth in 1801, leaving him his infant daughter, Marie. He became a doting father to her, eager to share with her his love for the estate, for nature, for music, the sciences and the Bible. He taught her himself and instilled in her his cherished principles of enlightened Josephinism. He believed in providing a good education for his daughter so that she later could teach her children and become a force for good in her family. Eventually Baron Vockel married Marie's governess, a Countess Piatti, who vied with him in devotion to the motherless girl. In

later years he suffered from a chest complaint. Vainly he tried to find a cure at the resort of Pistjan and died in 1829 at the age of fifty-six, the same year in which his first grand-daughter Friederike, named after him, was born. Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach, his second grand-daughter, never knew her grandfather, since he died before she was born. But she admired him all her life for the circumspection with which he had administered Zdislawitz and was grateful to him for the education he had given her mother. The latter had worshipped her father and after his death had continued life on the estate according to his social and ethical principles.

Marie Vockel's husband, Baron Franz Dubsky von Trebomyslic, Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach's father, was a widower seventeen years her senior, and member of an old, high-aristocratic Moravian family. The Dubsky line can be traced back to the early fifteenth century, before the Thirty Years War, which wiped out most of Central Europe's archives. In 1406 a Wilhelm Dubsky of Trebomyslic is mentioned as the first Earl of the royal Moravian Castle of Karlstein. In 1576 another Wilhelm Dubsky married a Moravian aristocrat. He became wealthy and distinguished and was ennobled in 1608. During the Thirty Years War the Dubskys were wrongly accused of siding with the enemy of the Habsburgs in the Battle of the White Mountain in 1620.

The Habsburgs finally won the battle and expelled the rebels from the country. Many properties were confiscated and given to those who had proved faithful to the victors. The Dubsky properties were given to the Jesuits, the initiators of the Counter Reformation in Austria. The Dubskys rose to some prominence again with Baron Ferdinand Dubsky

(1650-1721) who was Grandprior of the Maltese Order and Privy Councillor. He also was the first published writer in the family, defending the rights of the Maltese Order in Latin pamphlets.

Financially the Dubskys were not well off, in spite of their titles. In 1767 Maximilian August Dubsky died in poverty in a Vienna hospital. His brother Johann Carl had to seek refuge in Vienna and his five sons had to earn a living in the service of an estate administrator. One of these, Franz Karl Dubsky, the great-uncle of Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach, managed to enter the Civil Service, to acquire the estates Lissitz and Dirnowitz in Moravia through marriage and to be elevated to the rank of Count in 1810. A year later he became county chief of justice in his province.

His brother, Baron Johann Nepomuk Dubsky (1752-90), Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach's paternal grandfather, became a translator of oriental languages in General Laudon's staff. He translated Kadi Omer Effendi's Turkish report of the campaign in Bosnia (1737-39). This soldier-diplomat-translator was married to Johanna von Moschop of Koblenz, from an ennobled family of civil servants. When he died at age thirty-eight he was survived by his wife, three sons and a daughter. They lived in very straightened circumstances, since state pensions were minimal and life insurances were not yet in existence. Helene, the daughter, stayed with her mother until her marriage, her brothers all joined the army. The oldest, Joseph, died in the Battle of Dresden in 1813, the youngest, Fritz, died in a battle near Parma a year later. Franz Dubsky, Marie Ebner's father, was seriously wounded near Cléry (France) and in 1815 had to retire from active military service. Seven years later he married Konradine

von Sorgenthal, the daughter of a prominent industrialist in Vienna. She brought the "Rabenhaus" on the Rotenthurmstrasse as dowry into the marriage. She died, childless, in 1825 (B II 50).

The Napoleonic Wars took their toll of lives and deeply affected the population of the whole of Europe. The tragedies of the Dubsky family certainly matched the misfortunes of the Vockels, but what characterized all of Marie Ebner's ancestors was their strong will and their determination to survive. They had shown endurance and resilience in the face of adversity and had not given up, but achieved recognition by dint of hard work and dedicated service. Typically, her father said after the death of his second wife: "If the heavens destroy my home I have to see to it that it is put up again" (EME II,3). While her ancestors had fought with their swords to defend their country, Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach fought with her pen in defence of her values.

There is an old Roman saying Nomen est omen. The name Dubsky means "of the oaks".¹ The oak is the toughest and strongest of the trees that grow in Central Europe. All her life Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach showed some of the strength of the oak, a strength which no doubt she inherited from her ancestors. She knew that she also owed gratitude to all those relatives and friends who had supported her in her fight for her art. She was also aware that writing as such had given her strength. It had been therapy in times of trial, a welcome outlet for her inner struggles.

At seventy-five Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach could calmly look back at her life with a sense of accomplishment. She felt proud of her origins, of her genealogical as well as her spiritual roots. She surveyed the

events and the people that had helped and hindered her on her way to realizing herself as a writer. She could now confirm in Meine Kinderjahre, the galley proofs of which were lying in front of her:

The healing power of time helped turn to good what appeared wrong-headed at the outset. The harder the soil and the more obstreperous it proved to be, in which the tender tree of my art had to take root, the firmer it stood: and the more cruel the failures were that accompanied every step at the beginning of my career the closer grew the covenant between myself and my much contested talent (851).

She had fought bravely like her soldier ancestors, and she had finally won her

battle.

NOTES

1. I received this information from Dr. Eva Kushner, President of Victoria University in the University of Toronto. I gratefully acknowledge her help.

It is noteworthy that Marie Ebner uses the metaphor of the oak-tree in the context of women's writing. In a letter to the writer and editor Baron Emmerich du Mont, in which she complains about discrimination against women writers she states: "I stand for it, that every hen in Germany is glad not to have to cackle and that every one who was not relieved from cackling thinks: 'If only it had never sung to me in your leaves, you blessed oak'. But it did sing, the call did take place, and the hen has to follow it" (B I 277).

PART ONE:

CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH (1830-1848)

"Fate hammers us either soft or hard;

it depends on the material"

CHAPTER 1:

"FOR THIS LITTLE GIRL THERE WAS NO MIDDLE ROAD"

The year 1830 was marked by agitation and insurrection in Europe. In the wake of the July Revolution in Paris peoples of various nations started to rebel against feudal laws and demanded the right to self-government. Metternich's Restauration Period was coming to an end and Austrians, encouraged by the example of the Belgians, the Polish, and the Italians who had revolted against absolutist regimes, likewise began to oppose a system that held them in political and intellectual captivity. Freedom from censorship and the right to self-determination were no longer seen as abstract ideals but gained concrete significance among the nations.

On September 13 of that very year, on the Moravian estate Zdislawitz, a girl was born, who would highly value her freedom and empathize all her life with people craving for justice and freedom from oppression. This girl would one day use her narrative talent to describe the fate of those who were oppressed by their feudal lords. She would admonish her peers to adapt to the changing reality in order to avoid the demise of the Austrian aristocracy.

Marie Dubsky von Trebomyslic was named after her mother who died sixteen days after Marie's, her second daughter's birth. In her autobiographical story "Die Erste Beichte" Marie later described herself as

sickly and feebly born, and during baptism Father Joseph thought her life would depart under his blessing hand. But the weak spark of life was glimmering, whereas the one from which it had caught fire, was quickly flickering towards



Zdislawitz Manor, birthplace of Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach ,

death. The hardly awakened existence had been dearly paid for; a few days after the priest had baptized the child, he accompanied the mother to her grave (465).

Marie Dubsky, née Vockel, had been the soul of Zdislawitz, the country estate where she had grown up. She cared for the staff of the manor and for the villagers as for a large family. In return they adored her and mourned her deeply when she died at the young age of twenty-nine.

The servants talked about her, the officials, the villagers, the garden workers. An old servant never mentioned her name without lifting his hat. "That was a woman, your mother! May she be with God... There were bloodied heads at her funeral; people fought for the honour of carrying her coffin. That was a woman!" (MK 750).

A life-size portrait of Marie Vockel adorned the room of "grandma Vockel", the stepmother of the deceased, and those who had known her kept reminding her daughter, little Marie, of the love and respect her mother had commanded. From the painting by Agricola, a well-known portraitist of the time, Marie learned how beautiful and intelligent her mother was. "The lovely face suggests deep peace; the brown eyes have an alert and intelligent expression and they radiate the mild light of a mind that is as clear as it is profound" (MK 750). Moritz von Ebner-Eschenbach, her nephew, mentions in his memoirs: "I remember the delight with which I listened to her limpid piano-playing, her attractive voice, and I recall the precious evenings, when she read to me stories and fairy-tales" (EME I,2).

Admiring her mother and hearing her admired by everyone who knew her, little Marie strove to be like her, to look like her, to be loved like her. All her life Marie thought of her name as being a bond with her late mother, whom she never got to know personally but with whom she kept a close spiritual relationship.¹ In her autobiography Meine Kinderjahre she would later state:

We had been given to understand that she would keep watch over us from heaven and that she would be with us in hours of sickness or danger. I will never forget with what confidence and what mysterious bliss the consciousness of her nearness often filled me (750/51).

How close she felt to her late mother is also revealed in "Die Erste Beichte" where the protagonist, closely modelled after the author, treasures "a golden necklace which once belonged to her mother" (477) as her highest good and plans to leave this world in order not to sin any more and to be united in heaven with her beloved mother.

For Marie her late mother would always be the perfect mother and the perfect wife. In Marie's view she was the only one of her father's four wives to whom he had truly felt congenial and who had really understood how to deal with him. In Meine Kinderjahre she would later claim:

She lovingly and caringly protected all that was good and noble in him. She pushed the deficiencies of his character back into the shadows and tried to smooth out his rough angles. The years when she was at his side were the crown of his life and he always kept her memory sacred (770).

Baron Franz Dubsky was devastated when he lost his second wife and was left with his two infant daughters. Had not a relative prevented him he would have taken his life. Later he wrote to his sister Helene in Vienna:

How exceedingly happy had I been. Visibly favoured by heaven I had every reason to ask: Is there a happier person on earth than I? Now everything looks different. Thrown out of all of my heavens I can only ask: where can there be more pain and grief than in my heart? It should have ceased to beat instead of hers, because for my poor children the loss of a father over against that of such a mother as my Marie has been would have been far less painful in the present as well as in the future (MK 770).

He was fortunate to have his mother-in-law, Baroness Vockel, who was willing to move with him into the Drei-Raben-Haus in Vienna and to help him raise his two orphaned girls, Friederike, fourteen months and Marie,

the new-born baby. Baroness Vockel was devoted to her grand-daughters. She was a quiet, intelligent and rather reserved woman, who bore life after her husband's and her stepdaughter's untimely death with a stoic calm. "People called her indifferent. Only those nearest to her knew what that large soft heart had suffered and lost, till it had steeled itself to this external indifference" ("Beichte" 466).

She rarely complained, rarely expressed a concern, but was generous with her praise. Some of her standard phrases, used when the children approached her with their hurts and fears, were: "Be still, be reasonable", and "Everything passes, everything will be alright" (MK 752). Her stoicism was probably as much a result of her eighteenth-century upbringing, in which discipline and self-control were supreme values, as of the resignation following the death of the most precious persons she had had. She had seen much human failing in her life and had come to rather uncomplimentary conclusions about humankind in general. Marie Ebner says about her grand-mother:

Her large jet-black eyes had a melancholic look. Sometimes I saw it change into a painfully disdainful expression -- but it never became contemptuous or condemning. She would not easily be surprised by an injustice she saw committed. But she could be happily amazed at a generous deed she witnessed or was told about, as if this were her own good fortune (MK 751).

In Zdislawitz "Grandma Vockel" occupied a room which overlooked the yard with the mausoleum on one side and the fields with the mountain range in the distance on the other side. Above her desk there was an oil painting of her dog who had been very close to her. Grandma Vockel kept the household accounts and was always seen knitting and crotcheting clothes for her grandchildren and for the poor in the village.

She advised her son-in-law in the administration of the estate but secretly was afraid of his hot-tempered and rather violent ways. She tried to help where she could, but never interfered.

She was one of those persons who believe that most evils will get worse if one talks about things, she hated complaints. Her help never failed but it came quietly and she did not accept thanks. She feared outbreaks of joy as much as those of grief ("Beichte" 466).

She became the children's substitute mother, and especially Marie formed a strong bond with her. All the qualities of wisdom, strength, courage and generosity of spirit that Marie would later admire in women were those she had encountered in Grandma Vockel's character.

Although she did not talk much to her grandmother, Marie always knew that she was a kindred spirit. As she recalled in Meine Kinderjahre: "The quiet understanding between grandmother and grandchild strengthened their ties. Hardly ever were fewer words exchanged between two who loved each other, and never did two people understand each other better" (851). When Friederike, called Fritzi, was down with measles one year, the six-year old Marie stayed at Grandma Vockel's apartment on the second floor of the Rabenhaus. In the morning, Marie, awake much earlier than her grandmother, entertained herself by peeling off the coating of the wallpaper. She had a marvelous time watching the bubbles burst as they gradually bared the wall, leaving a space "like an ocean on a map" (MK 873). The maid was horrified and outraged when she saw what little Marie had done, yet Grandma Vockel was not perturbed. Her only comment was: "We will have it repainted" (873). She understood children and never made a fuss about their little pranks.

When, in 1832, Baron Dubsky decided to remarry, Grandma Vockel worried about her two grand-daughters: "Now we would no longer amount to anything... we would be set back" (MK 752). She may have feared the same for herself. So far she had been living in the mansion which her stepdaughter had owned and, taking care of her son-in-law's children, she had a position of some authority in the family. A new woman at the head of the household, totally unrelated to her and the family, would change all that. Fortunately for the children as well as for the grandmother, the new wife did not justify the stereotype of the vicious step-mother which permeates folk-literature, but became a caring mother to Marie and her sister, loving and beloved.

Maman Eugénie, as the children called her, was a Baroness Bartenstein, a descendant of a family in the vicinity of Zdislawitz, one of whose ancestors, Johann Christoph Bartenstein, a professor's son from Strassbourg, had converted to Catholicism and had become a leading Austrian statesman under Maria Theresia (Siegert, 59). Eugénie was a warm and kind woman who particularly liked children. She bore two sons, Adolph in 1833, Viktor in 1834, and a daughter Sophie, a year later. She treated all her children, including those she had inherited from Baron Dubsky's former marriage, with the same love and understanding.

Marie adored her "much, much loved" (MK 782) Maman Eugénie and vied with her siblings for her affection. Since she had not formed an emotional tie with her biological mother, she accepted Eugénie Bartenstein as her "Maman" and in those years never felt deprived of motherly love and care. In contrast to some of the aristocratic ladies described in Ebner-Eschenbach's work, who seldom saw their children and, preferring

their social commitments to childcare, left them totally in the charge of their maids, Eugénie insisted on having her children around. She took them along on her outings to the Prater in Vienna and spent as much time with them as she could. The children in turn were deeply attached and considered it a cruel blow when they had to be separated from her.

In 1836 a cholera epidemic broke out in Moravia. Many people in and around Zdislawitz caught the disease and many lost their lives. Dr. Engel, the Jewish doctor, together with Father Borek, the Catholic parish priest, worked indefatigably to save lives and to comfort the bereaved. Baron Dubsky established a soup kitchen in his court yard where the villagers came together to get their meals. Despite precautions Eugénie and the two-year-old Viktor caught the disease and had to be separated for weeks from the rest of the family. In Meine Kinderjahre Ebner-Eschenbach recalls the joy she felt when one day the nursemaid came running into the yard to tell the children to look up at the window of the nursery, which had been transformed into a sickroom, where they would see something they had not seen for a long time.

Now an unspeakable jubilation broke forth. To see something which we had not seen for a long time, and there at the window? It was easy to guess what that would be. The little one! The little one -- and perhaps even Mama! We stood and looked and fretted in burning expectation. Now the inner wing of the window at which we gazed was opened and Mama stepped close to the outer wing and with her our old Pepi with a creature on her arm, at whose sight we waved and laughed. It was our poor little brother. But his face was yellow like a lemon and quite shrunk. The sadly pinched little mouth tried to smile at us, and a tired little hand rose and sent greetings down to us. Adolf began to dance and turned round and round like a dervish, the youngest screeched with joy. And all of us sent countless kisses up to our convalescents. It was a miracle that our longing did not pull us up to them as if by ropes (807).



Marie Ebner's brothers Adolf and Victor Dubsky in 1836

Baron Dubsky, just then coming out of the house with Dr. Engel, saw the joy in the faces of his children and gratefully embraced the family doctor, who had saved the two patients. Having lost many loved ones in his life, Baron Dubsky must have been particularly relieved about his wife's and his son's recovery. But he did not often show his affection. He considered the exhibition of love a sign of sentimentality, and he usually preferred to appear in the role of the stern and distant authority, whose command everyone in the family had to obey. Fritzi and Marie especially feared their father who, due to his explosive impulsiveness and irritability, could hold the whole family in a state of constant apprehension. He seldom saw the children, except in the morning when they were taken to his study by the nursemaid to greet him with a curtsy and a handkiss. According to aristocratic tradition he left the upbringing of his children to nursemaids, governesses and tutors and saw himself as the ultimate authority in the family, imbued with absolutist and patriarchal notions of manhood and fatherhood.

The military school, which he had entered as a very young man, and the battlefields, where he had received his decisive formation, may have helped him to develop "the manly virtue of justice", for which his daughter Marie would later praise him (MK 769), but it did nothing to enable him to relate to his children.

The hot-blooded man, the brave Austrian officer, who had spent his youth in warfare, had retained his soldier-like and rather violent attitude also in civilian life. "You need not love me but you should fear me", were the words which his subjects often heard from him. He did not ask whether his children loved him. He considered it his children's duty to love their parents and it was understood that his children would do their duty (MK 466).

To Marie her father appeared as a family tyrant with whom she had a relationship that resembled that of the Russian Tsar to his subjects. While he had unlimited power, they had to submit unconditionally (MK 765).

Amiable as Papa could be in his good hours, he was terrible in his incomprehensibly easily provoked anger. Then his blue eyes grew hard and had the cold glimmer of steel, his powerful voice rose threateningly and, facing these eyes, hearing this voice, we would have preferred to sink into the ground, even if we were not aware of the slightest wrongdoing (MK 757).

Baron Dubsky was also known for his unpredictability. In Meine Kinderjahre Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach reports an incident where her older sister Fritzi had broken a window-pane while playing ball.

"Here comes Papa, Papa", she cried in mortal fear, kneeling down on the floor, wringing her little hands, folding them and sobbing that it rent one's heart... She was already getting blue in her face, her breath came out in little bursts, tears flowed like rivulets down her cheeks (757).

Her grandmother must then have intervened with the feared Papa, for when he came in, he picked Fritzi up, tried to console her and, to everybody's surprise, smashed another window pane in order to demonstrate how little he cared for those broken windows. "Papa was dancing around with his little daughter in his arms and we cheered and shouted for joy at him" (758). But if Marie thought she had understood her father's logic, she was mistaken. The next day she felt emboldened to smash an old coffee pot which she detested, in the hope that Papa would throw the equally hated milk jug after it. It did not work that way. Instead of Papa's support, Marie got a severe punishment from Pepinka, the nursemaid.

As much as Marie feared her father's fierce moods, his aggressive and sometimes even abusive ways, she also admired him for his courage.

During a cattle drive one of the bulls got away from the herd and began furiously to run about the farmyard. Everyone jumped for cover -- but not Count Dubsky. Without any protection he fearlessly faced the animal, sternly admonishing it: "You, here!" The bull accepted the command of someone who obviously possessed authority and trotted back to the herd (MK 769).

Marie also enjoyed it when her father told stories and anecdotes from the war against Napoleon, and she especially cherished the story about the generous Frenchman who had given her father his own coat for protection against the cold (MK 768). As a storyteller Baron Dubsky could fascinate all the children and Marie especially, who appreciated this gift of his the most. In her collection of diary entries "Aus einem zeitlosen Tagebuch" she would later preserve an anecdote her father had told which must have been among her favourites: A businessman had sent his brother from Australia a particularly beautiful and intelligent parrot. Upon his return to Austria he asked his relatives how they had liked the bird whereupon he received the reply: "He was a bit tough". Amazed and shocked the businessman inquired: "For heaven's sake you did not cook him and eat him? He spoke fourteen languages". His brother, somewhat abashed, retorted: "Why, then, did he not say anything?" (725/6).

Baron Dubsky, an excellent equestrian himself, also taught his children to ride and to hunt. Marie learned from him how to treat the horses in the stables of Zdislawitz and developed a passion for riding. She also went hunting with her father but never really enjoyed it since she loved animals too much to see them killed. The protagonist of "Komtesse Paula", who talks about her outings with her father, echoes Marie's feelings:

We take long rides together; formerly we used to go hunting together, and he was pleased when I shot a rabbit -- more

than I was. As far as I am concerned, all rabbits can stay alive at the expense of the young nursery plants and the cabbages (Harriman 326).

In the same story the father emerges as a man the protagonist thinks "frightfully dear" and whose tyranny makes her suffer (333). Time and again Paula refers to her "fear of her beloved father" (326), a theme that is repeated throughout Ebner-Eschenbach's work.

Marie's fear of her father changed from being afraid of his punishment in younger years, to being afraid of his outbursts of temper when she was an adult, but the fear of him remained. This ambivalent relationship with her father, consisting of love and fear, affected Marie so much in her childhood that it took her all her life to come to terms with it. Writing became a means of analyzing her father and her feelings towards him, which gradually changed from anger and reproach to pity for the man, who had once bullied his whole family, and who had ended lonely and dependent.

In her 1875 story "Die erste Beichte", written shortly after her father's death, Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach accuses her father of authoritarianism, arrogance, suspicion and lack of understanding. In her 1889 novel Unsühnbar she has the protagonist excuse her authoritarian and arrogant father by saying: "The strong man was helpless in the grip of his passions, was that not reason enough to pity him?" In her 1901 story "Die Reisegefährten" she has the narrator say about a father, who had terrorized his family:

He appears to me today in a somewhat milder light than he did then... Equally repulsive, but not quite as contemptible. He really was not a bad man, he did not fleece his peasants, nor mistreat his servants. But he was devious, limited and egotistical... Wherever he showed up, there it was him alone,

no other person would count, everyone had lost the right to a self of his own (567).

In her 1903 story "Die arme Kleine" the father who has never much cared for, nor tried to understand his children, is pitied by his dying son: "We did not love Papa enough. He is good, much better than we knew" (754). Finally, in Meine Kinderjahre, Ebner-Eschenbach, while still admitting her father's character flaws, goes out of her way to portray his virtues and strengths: "What was lacking was balance and a perception for the emotional life even of those who were closest to him. However, in the final analysis, he was a man with a warm heart, strong in body and mind" (770).

Having been deeply influenced by her hot-tempered, authoritarian father in her formative years, it is no wonder that Marie later modelled many of her male characters after him. Her stories abound with despotic and irascible men who tyrannize their wives and children. Her father's character emerges in many literary figures and some of them even have his physique. In "Die erste Beichte" she mentions her father as having thick short hair "which stood upright on his head like a brush and which grew into a sharp point in the middle of his brow" (469) making him appear extremely strict and fear-inspiring. In "Maslan's Frau" the medical doctor has the same kind of hair growing into his forehead (455), and in "Glaubenslos" Leo Klinger's father has a similar physique and also resembles Baron Dubsky in his attitude to his fellow men:

His iron-coloured hair grew deep into the low and flat brow, the dark grey eyes looked sullen and haughty. The corners of the mouth were drawn down and surrounded by an expression of invincible pigheadedness. Against the assertions or orders which fell from these lips, an inferior or a weak person would hardly have dared to object (290/1).

No wonder, that Baron Dubsky's authority was regularly evoked by Pepinka, the Czech nursemaid, when she feared to lose control over the five Dubsky children. When they behaved badly they were simply told "Wait, I'll tell your father and then you will see" (MK 757) -- a threat which, given the baron's penchant for losing his temper, must have amply fulfilled its purpose.

The fiery, black-eyed maid, known outside the nursery room as Josefa Navratil, was for the children the "goddess of fate" (MK 753). She kept her world in order with a strong and well-aimed hand and did not shy away from physical punishment, when she thought it appropriate. Little Marie calmly accepted what she called a demonstratio directa (MK 752). She respected Pepinka's authority and agreed with the maxim, that a wicked deed had to be followed by punishment, a principle she would later also advocate in her work.²

In her autobiography Marie Ebner remembers that once a year Pepinka, called "Pepi" by the children, was bled by the village barber. The children, not knowing what it meant, were always struck with great horror because the next day their maid would invariably have a bandaged arm, but would never explain what had happened. Once the children listened outside the room where Pepi was being treated by the barber:

Dear God, what was going on? Gripped by fear and by an urge to help, we threw ourselves against the door. It was locked. We shouted and banged and heard Papa sigh: "Jesus, the children"! "Be quiet! Stay out!" the manly voice thundered. Paralyzed with horror we kept quiet for a while. Finally the door was unlocked, opened and the chambermaid came out carrying a large bowl full of blood. Blood! Blood! So much blood! From whom did all that blood come? (MK 754).

How much affection Marie had for her nursemaid can be seen from the many loving descriptions of maids in her work, most prominently the

portrayal of the eponymic heroine of Bozena, her first major work. Like Pepinka, Bozena Ducha is a strong, simple-minded character and a dedicated mother figure, dearly loved by the child in her care.

She treated the child, that was now exclusively entrusted to her, as a mother-bear would have treated a little dog, to whom she had taken a motherly affection. When she shook her giant fist against the little one and shouted at her with a voice that seemed to emerge from the chest of an ogre, the insolent little thing laughed, but she also obeyed (78).

In spite of the fear which Pepi must have instilled into the children's heart, they dearly loved her and Marie kept a lifelong contact, even supporting her financially in her old age. On October 3, 1866 Marie Ebner wrote in her diary:

Called on old Pepi in Kremsier. She has become very old, small and frail -- "shrunken" the Viennese say -- but she does not look ill. My visit made her happy and her joy did me good. The poor, poor old woman. She can barely make ends meet. She lives with her son Aloys in a small groundfloor room; two beds, a table, two chairs are all that she possesses by way of furniture. I will not wait another four weeks before sending her something (TB I 121).

Upon learning of Pepi's death in September 1868, Marie Ebner entered in her diary: "Death of our old nursemaid Pepi: with the loyal old woman a part of our childhood has been buried; her care and loyalty have not been adequately honoured, neither by us nor by her own child" (TB I 235).

If Pepinka represented Tyche in Marie's early universe, Anischa, Marie's wetnurse, represented the Muses. She was "the bright star of our nursery, always friendly and good to us" (MK 753). Marie mentions Anischa's prettiness and her fondness for fine dresses, but more than that she admired two incomparable qualities: Anischa was the children's refuge and consolation in all their woes and tribulations, and she was a fascinating storyteller. She ignited the spark of Marie's imagination and

made her aware of the uncanny realm of the mysterious. "O what a storyteller our Anischa was -- how she understood to describe, to build up tension, to portray clearly and vividly the creations of her fantasy, to let them arise, float by and disappear" (MK 754).

Remembering the rich delights experienced through Anischa's wonderful stories, Marie Ebner in old age laments the deprivation of children for whom fairytales are banned "on principle", as it often must have been the case in the progressive science-oriented late nineteenth century. In contrast, at the tender age of four, Marie learned "to see and hear what others do not hear and see" -- the voice of the "waterman in the gargling sounds of a spring, the rushing of elves in the rustling of leaves, the flashes of light spirits in the shimmer of wheat fields" (MK 755).

Marie must have shown great courage early on. She was chosen by Anischa to hear fairytales, too frightening for the other children. She became privy to the gruesome exploits of zla hlava, a fear inspiring head with bushy hair, a flaming beard, devilish eyes and gigantic ears (MK 756). With determination she declared: "I am not afraid. I do not know what it means to be scared. I have great courage" (MK 756).

Anischa stayed in the Dubsky household till she was married to an imposing young officer who came to visit occasionally. Losing Anischa was Marie's first deep sorrow. She was indignant that the nursemaid had left without saying goodbye and offended that Pepi, by telling her Anischa would soon be back, had lied to her.

I did not want to believe that Anischa was coming back... I felt cheated and betrayed. No, no! She would not return, never. The horrible Hannake would never part with her. Outraged, I cursed him and Pepi, who had delivered Anischa

to him, and I behaved like a lout when meeting with the first bitter pain in my life (MK 776).

Marie never forgot her beautiful wetnurse, who had lovingly shown her the way into the fascinating world of fancy and fairytale. She remained in touch with Anischa by regular correspondence. Anischa, unable to write, faithfully replied by dictating her letters to her parish priest. By way of signature she put a little black cross at the end of her letters (MK 776).

Her first formal introduction to reading and writing Marie received from Mr. Volteneck, the administrator of the estate Zdislawitz.

He had a round figure and a head which seemed squashed at the temples, and from a distance he looked like a top hat with a small cucumber on it. His basic colours were brown and yellow; brown the clever, soft eyes, the artless wig, the area near the nose which incessantly asked for snuff, and the tips of the fingers, which delivered the aromatic dust. The small hands and the small face were yellow. The colour of this man's soul could only have been the most delicate apple blossom pink (MK 759).

Marie had heard some malicious gossip about the man. Her description certainly is proof (if such is needed) of the acute powers of observation which children possess at any age. She liked her first teacher; she admired his beautiful handwriting and the many different scripts he knew. When, after six months of instruction, her father found out that she could not yet read, he summoned her for a "test". Marie failed miserably, not least of all because she was frightened to death when he tried to examine her. Although Marie later devoured books, at first she hated reading because it deprived her of her freedom to roam around in the park and in the fields of Zdislawitz.

It was customary in upper class families to employ a governess for the girls, once they had outgrown the nursery. She was supposed to supervise the children's behaviour as well as teach some subjects suitable

for young girls, usually French and some history. At age five Marie received her first French governess, an event which she awaited with great trepidation. Warned by Pepinka that from now on she would have to sit still and be quiet all day and stay close to a woman whose language she was unable to understand, Marie went into a panic. When Mademoiselle Hélène Hallé finally arrived, Marie threw a temper tantrum and had to be carried into the governess' room to greet her.

Fortunately for both, this first impression did not last. Very soon the young, friendly woman won her charge's heart and was able to exert a lasting influence on her. In no time Marie considered it a privilege to be with Mademoiselle Hallé, and she and Fritz were able to speak and read French remarkably soon.

What bothered Marie much was the fact that besides reading and learning French she also had to busy herself with needlework. Right from the start she had a strong disdain for what were then deemed "womanly skills". In Meine Kinderjahre she recalls:

I was supposed to learn to knit. It is still inexplicable to me why this appeared shameful to me. I resisted strongly and at great length, but my resistance was finally overcome. The horror with which I recoiled from the art of knitting ended with the manufacture of stocking bands for my beloved Maman. They were the most illbegotten objects that had ever been put together, but the most masterful work could not have been welcomed more joyously than that miserable thing. With what tenderness did Maman take me into her arms and wipe off the tears which I shed, while depositing the token of my submission in her lap (773).

To have to sit in a room and knit was seen by Marie as another restriction of her highly valued freedom. While the birds flew from tree to tree and her little brothers and her youngest sister were able to play, she had to spend her time learning what was then considered one of the most

important pastimes for women. Her grandmother and all the women in the family regularly busied themselves with needlework and produced garments for the villagers in Zdislawitz. Likewise, women in Marie's later fictional work would often be described as knitting in their leisure time. Yet she herself rebelled against this occupation and saw it as a strait-jacket, which not only deprived her of the freedom to roam the countryside, but also of the freedom to use her imagination. Knitting had been recommended for young girls for the very reason of preventing them from indulging in flights of fancy considered unbecoming (Kössler 71).

It was felt that the sooner a girl learned to submit to authority the better for her in later life. Marie knew that lamenting and rebelling against paternal decree were absolutely useless. Therefore she also had no say when, after two happy years, Mademoiselle Hallé left the Dubskys to return to France and a new governess was engaged, who had no interest whatsoever in the children.

We did not know who had recommended Mademoiselle Henriette to our parents, but we were convinced that these people would have to answer for it on Judgement Day! God had created Mademoiselle Henriette a governess in his anger! She was pretty and young; and that is where her resemblance to H  lene Hall   ended. In everything else she was her very opposite. Outwardly a slim brunette of medium height, mighty dark in the hair, fire in her eyes. Inwardly -- a dragon! (MK 777).

How much Marie suffered under this "dragon" is recorded in several of her stories. In "Die erste Beichte" Mademoiselle Henriette is rendered as a vain and unrelenting governess whose main concern is to make herself attractive to her employer. She totally lacks affection for the children entrusted to her care. In "Ein kleiner Roman" the narrator echoes Marie's

suffering when stating: "It means something to a child to always have to be together with a person to whom he cannot get close" (18).

To be forced to spend all day with a woman she hated was a traumatic experience for the seven-year-old girl, an experience which may have taught her to become more reserved with people and distrustful of human relationships. She had by now lost two caregivers to whom she had been deeply attached and therefore she began to withdraw into herself. Later in life she would often be accused of not being open (ZT 730), of not trusting people enough, and the seed of this reticence may have been planted in those sad years under the rule of Mademoiselle Henriette. Marie's aversion to her was so strong that one day, when the governess dared to make fun of a concert the Dubsky children had attended, she felt like slapping her face.

All my anger and hatred against her came to the fore. I stormed, I did no longer let myself be subdued by her threats. I do not want to take an oath on it but I am afraid I offered to smack her. When she, no less angry than I, threatened to go to Papa and to denounce me to him, I flung the door open, mad with rage, and shouted: "Go! Go!" (MK 791).

No wonder, therefore, that governesses in Ebner-Eschenbach's work are mostly described as taking sides against their wards. They stand sentry ("Erste Beichte", "Resel") and give away their charges' secrets of the heart ("Nach dem Tode"). Even as a septuagenarian Marie with an aching heart remembered that because of this governess she and her brothers and sisters "learned most thoroughly how profoundly unhappy children can be who consider themselves defenselessly handed over to an evil power" (MK 778).

As Marie later recalls in her autobiography, her misery would have been ended had Maman Eugénie not been ill. In the spring of 1837 she had borne a baby girl who died soon after and Eugénie never recovered from her confinement. When Marie later thought of her "Maman" one event stood out in her mind which haunted her so much that she had to mention it in Meine Kinderjahre. "I was then in my seventh year, and today I am in my seventy-fifth. But when the memory of that hour arises, a reflex of that pain, that tore my child's heart apart, awakes in me" (782). Maman Eugénie, already close to delirium, wrongly accused Marie of lying and the latter was unable to justify herself, since she had been told by her aunt that Eugénie "must under no circumstance be excited by any kind of contradiction. The physician had strongly advised it. And so, since I had insisted on coming to her, I would have to accept silently the accusations against me, I would have to ask for forgiveness and then go away" (MK 781).

This unfortunate encounter with her stepmother left a deep and lasting impression on the little girl, an impression which she later translated into fiction. In "Das Schädliche" she has the narrator say about Lore at her mother's deathbed: "It was horrible. The child could not wring a motherly feeling out of her. And when the child clung with passionate tenderness to her and the dying woman looked down upon her with secret horror, it crept up my spine" (617). Lore, who no longer begged and also had given up crying out of "inexpressible bitterness" (617), is a sketch of Marie herself.

Marie felt particularly hurt about being called a liar because she always had a very profound desire to be honest. Admonished by her

father, who called himself a "knight of truthfulness", and who was known in his circles as a man who did not hesitate to speak his mind, Marie likewise tried to cling to the truth. In her essay "Aus meinen Kinder- und Lehrjahren" she describes an incident where as a child she gave a teacher, who hated steel pens, her word never to use an utensil like that again. When unable to fulfill her promise because her father provided only steel pens for her, Marie suffered terrible qualms of conscience. These were heightened by the fact that the teacher, to whom she had given her word of honour, died at just around this time (Schmidt 271). It is therefore not astonishing that many of Ebner-Eschenbach's protagonists, like Bozena and Maria Dornach, to name but a few, have an oversensitized conscience and suffer terribly, if they are unable to reveal the whole truth.

Eugénie's death was a great tragedy with sad consequences for the family. Baron Dubsky, shaken by the bitter loss of his third spouse, dropped his usual mask of reserve and strength and cried with the children "like a child" (MK 783). Henceforth deep melancholy would rule the family. While Maman Eugénie had been a warm and cheerful person, Aunt Helene, Baron Dubsky's sister, who now took charge of the household, had a tendency to fall into depression (MK 783). She sacrificed her independence by giving up her own meticulously run household to take charge of her brother's ménage and to help raise his five children.

The children were still too young fully to realize the impact of the tragedy that had befallen the family. They wore black clothes, continued their games and only gradually understood what a sad void Eugénie had

left behind. In the summer all five now went to the crypt in Zdislawitz to pray for Maman Eugénie who had been buried next to Marie Vockel.

My sister and I often entered the quiet and cool room in order to pray there for our mother. It was no secret to us that the good Maman, whom we had now lost, was the real mother of our three younger siblings and that our mother had died a few days after my birth. Now the two were resting side by side, and now the "little ones" too came with us into the crypt and we prayed together for our Maman and for our unknown -- well-known mother (KL 273).

Marie was by now well acquainted with death. She had lost her biological mother, she had seen many villagers succumb to cholera, her first teacher in Vienna had been taken from her through a sudden death, and now her dearly beloved stepmother had left her forever. When Eugénie's new-born baby had died and the "sinister miracle of death" had taken place in the family, the children were told that the departed would now "belong to dear God" (KL 273).

All these experiences shaped Marie's outlook on death and may well have been the reason why she would later claim that she herself was never afraid of dying, of entering into the realm of the omniscient God ("Schattenleben" 464). Her work abounds with people who die or are mentioned as having died before the actual story begins and especially mothers are often reported as having died, leaving their young daughters behind.

Marie's experience with death has filtered into the story "Der Fink", in which she describes little Pia who has found a newborn finch that has fallen from its nest and that looks as if it is going to die. "Terrible, terrible, death is something terrible, and I have it here, feel it... A horror crept over her and she whispered to the bird: 'Don't die, don't die in my hand'" (Harriman 99).

And later, when the bird has safely reached the tree, where its mother has been anxiously waiting for it, Pia envies its joy of being reunited with its mother: "She paused suddenly and looked thoughtfully into the distance and slowly repeated: 'with its mother'. She had not known what that meant. She had been so tiny at the time... but it must be wonderful for a bird -- and a child" (Harriman 100).

The longing to be reunited with her mother was also subconsciously one of the reasons why Marie once tried to commit suicide. As she would later record in the same story, "Der Fink", to be with one's mother meant to be saved from all enemies (Harriman 100). After Maman Eugénie's death the presence of the hated governess, Marie's declared enemy, must have been particularly painful and the seven-year-old girl may have had thoughts of escape from this sad reality.

Father Borek, the parish priest of Zdislawitz, a kind and lenient man, taught religion twice a week. He also had the task of preparing the Dubsky girls for their first confession. Marie, taking the absolution formula quite literally, resolved rather to die than to offend God again. As she states in Meine Kinderjahre:

Someone who wants to die jumps out of the window and this version of fleeing into the Beyond was to be mine. That our house had only one storey and that my fall need not be fatal I did not consider. I was removed from the obvious, was floating in heavenly spheres, coming close to the presence of God, into the open arms of my mother (804).

Yet Marie's "ascension" failed. Instead of jumping out of the window and being reunited with her mother after her first confession she crashed her head against the mullion and fell back into the room. In "Die erste Beichte" the episode is rendered in the following way: "The window at which Clary had stood the night before in the sunset was open; in front

of it was a toppled chair and on the floor lay the child, bleeding from a wound on the forehead. She had wanted to throw herself down -- and hit the mullion... Praise be to whoever protected her" (479).

In this story Ebner-Eschenbach mainly blames the autocratic father for forcing her as a seven-year-old, far too immature child, to make her first confession. She points out that he insisted that women be instructed in religion, as a means to teach them obedience and also to protect the feudal status quo. Yet in her autobiography Marie Ebner puts the blame on herself, describing herself as a rather wilful child, who caused the good-natured priest much worry. That Marie was an exuberant, rather radical child is not only confirmed by her autobiography but also in "Die erste Beichte" where Marie Ebner portrays herself in the following way:

One thing was certain; for this little girl there was no middle road; she always moved in this or that extreme. Gay abandon or dark melancholy, dull indifference or a veritable melting with love, incompetence to understand the most simple things and surprising insight into difficult matters... (465).

Edinek, the orphan boy of "Unverbesserlich", is likewise "always ready to rush headlong into extremes" (196) and shares with his author the devotion to a parish priest: "full of contradictions as he might have been, in one thing he never changed, in his affection for the Pastor" (185).

Marie loved Father Borek and felt even more attached to him after the near fatal accident. She tried to please him, to make good for the many lapses of attention during catechism classes and attended the little village church in Hostiz with special devotion. It fascinated her to observe Father Borek celebrate mass. She studied every movement of his and then played celebrating the mass at home with her sister Fritzi in attendance

as server. Father Borek was, however, not amused when he was once invited to such an event:

We appeared in a solemn mood, my sister swinging the little bell, I behind her, the covered chalice in my hands, all devotion and absorption... But when we, the celebrant and the server, moved out, as serious as we had entered, I looked at the Reverend with expectation and waited for a friendly, approving look. Instead I met with consternation (MK 803).

The priest may very well have considered Marie an intruder into a sphere where women had no right to be. Little did he know that by playing priest she symbolically anticipated her future career. As a writer she would later always consider herself as having priestly responsibilities, a thought she also expressed in her aphorism "An artist -- a priest" (Reclam 53). From childhood on Marie was more at home in the male world and she much preferred racing with her brothers in the park of Zdislawitz to sitting by herself in the house, busy with feminine occupations. When her brother Adolph was six and Victor five they got a French tutor, M. Just Dufoulon, who was soon much at home in the family and was treated by the children like an older brother and playmate.

Marie had a special affection for him and made it a point to compete with him in sports and games. When he beat her in their races her pride was hurt so much that even in old age she recalls her antipathy to "male superiority, painfully felt for the first time" (Schmidt 129).³ She imagined herself to be Atalanta, the beautiful, swift-footed girl, who was superior to most men (MK 703). Marie's relationship with "Monsieur Just" by whom she sometimes felt treated like "a silly child" is recorded with modifications in "Die arme Kleine", where Erika experiences her first love for Levin Bornholm, the owner of Valahora, who likewise treats her like a "stupid little child" (744).

Much to the sorrow of the children, M. Just had to leave the Dubskys a few years later and died soon afterwards in France of typhoid fever. He had been his widowed mother's only child. Upon learning of their beloved friend's death, Marie and Fritz went to a ravine where, next to a spring deemed to have miraculous powers, a wooden statue of St. Anne had been placed on a old beech tree. In this tree M. Just had once carved his name and now the children put a little cross beside it as a sign of their loving memory.

Thus Marie lost another loved-one through death. From an exuberant, vehement, prankish child she gradually developed into a rather contemplative girl, extremely susceptible to pain and sorrow and often given to melancholy and pessimism. A few years earlier she had already begun to create her own imaginary world, a dream world into which she could escape when reality around her became too harsh. Once she had overcome her initial horror of those black letters whose meaning she could not grasp at first, she turned into a voracious reader. History began to fascinate her.

The Histoire universelle by Louis Richard, dit Bressel became a living fountain of happiness. There are not many people whose acquaintance has delighted and enriched me as much as the acquaintance with that book. Fat, large, closely printed on thin paper, it came in a blue and green marbled paper binding. But what treasure was hidden beneath that simple garb; a magic wand which transported me in a flash into the world of sagas, which let me glance into dark and bright spaces, into the most ancient times in mysterious distances and made me live in times gone by. It led up to the collapse of the Roman Empire and I followed, full of pain and hatred or with joyous admiration -- always burning with expectation. There was a time when one could open the book of my historian at any place, read a sentence to me and ask me to continue by heart. I did not fail. Up till now many a passage of this dear book has remained imprinted in my memory (MK 785).

With great enthusiasm she memorized the fables of Lafontaine and various French poems. Yet her greatest delight were the fairytales of the late eighteenth-century French moralist Charles Perrault, who became a major influence. Perrault considered fairy tales "seeds that one throws out, which first bring forth the emotions of joy and sadness, but which inevitably bloom later in the form of feelings" (Barchilon 120). He concludes his story "Peau d'Ane" (Donkey Skin) with the following admonition: "Teach children that they should suffer the worst of troubles rather than fail in accomplishing their moral duties, that the righteous path can bring about much misfortune but eventually it crowns the virtuous with success" (Barchilon 68). Marie must have taken all this to heart because she later advocated these tenets in her work.⁴ From Perrault she also may have learned the importance of lively and dramatic dialogue as a means to arouse the readers' empathy.

On Sundays after mass, when Grandma Vockel read in her devotional books, Marie would sit on top of two chairs, meant to look like a chariot, and dream about the heroes and heroines of her favourite fairytales. As she recalls in Meine Kinderjahre:

Sometimes, when there was prolonged silence in my corner, grandma turned to me and asked: "Are you still there? What are you doing?" Apparently I did nothing. In reality I had just killed a dragon or had thrown stepmother Grognon into a vat filled with poisonous snakes (787).

In those blissful hours, when her grandmother's presence gave her the security to fly away on the wings of her fantasies, Marie felt that she belonged to the same universal order as the heroes and heroines with whom she identified. All her desires, fears and hopes found expression in this world, a world where she could develop her personality. Marie Ebner's

memory of this happy time is reflected in the description of Erika of "Die arme Kleine" who, like herself, loves history and fairytales.

Her field, the home of her dreams, was the fairy tale. A blissful feeling permeated her when she went to and fro like a guard among the old yew trees in front of the garden house in which her dolls bleached and gathered dust, a book in hand, reading fairy tales. She was delighted by the stories of Perrault, the old French collector of fairy tales. She had learned in a few months from Mrs. Heideschmied to speak and to read French (661/2).

Dreaming about heroic adventures and creating a world of her own would be Marie's lifelong occupation. For quite a while she believed that she was surrounded by a void and that she created reality only when looking at the objects around herself.⁵

The sky to which I looked up, the sun, the moon, the stars and the countryside, which surrounded me, and that which gave life to it, all that was not. My eyes projected it there. Wherever my gaze fell, there the heavens would shine, there the earth would spread out. Where my gaze did not reach, there was nothing, emptiness. In front of me the world, behind me the terrible void, grey, mute, dead. How eager I was to find out about that nothing! It was frightening and unpleasant to always have to tell oneself: it is yawning behind you, it is spreading in its boundless poverty and unspeakable boredom. No, I did not always want to be fooled by it and I wanted to discover its mean mystery. I ran, as fast as I could, into the garden up to the fence and there, quick as lightning, I turned round... But everything had by then be put again into place, the shrubs, the trees, the flowerbeds and the meadows. My eyes were always too slow, they were always late (MK 798/9).

When writing her prose poem "Schattenleben" as a woman of sixty-two Marie had gained the conviction that "everything is, except the void" (464) but dreaming and stepping out of reality to become an onlooker on her life as the shadow of herself were still a great desire. Daydreaming did not mean idle wandering of the mind which her family so much condemned, it signified wish fulfilment, reminiscing, pondering and creating artistically

a world where personal problems and psychological conflicts could be solved.⁶ In Meine Kinderjahre Ebner-Eschenbach states:

Sometimes I took bold decisions. If people do not really exist, if I just imagine them, I will imagine them as they ought to be, so that I can get along with them... I will imagine a Papa of whom I am not frightened, a governess who does not torture me. I then approached my imagined father and a Mademoiselle Henriette, who in my imagination consisted of boundless friendliness and love, with such uninhibited confidence that it provoked irritated astonishment and resulted in many a punishment for me (MK 798).

In this dream world Marie was able to cope with her rather sad life. Her fantasy transported her to a place "beyond the mountains and a big ocean" (MK 798). There she also created her first literary figures, men like gods and women like fairy queens, and most of all children whose privilege it was to be "perfectly free like young foals on boundless pastures" (MK 798). All the freedom Marie herself was missing, all the emotions she could not vent on the people around her she invested in her imaginary characters. She had found a place where she could be herself. She lived in her characters, she identified with them.

I elaborated on their colourful plays, their games and their fights. I put myself into them, I was they. At one time this one, at another time another one; at one time a little girl, virtuous and eager to sacrifice herself, at another time a high spirited wild young boy. Not always was I able to take off the character whom I had adopted (MK 799).⁷

Soon Marie not only invented her characters but also began a correspondence with them. Writing had been great fun for her from the start. Like a boy, who played with his tin soldiers, she dealt with the letters lining them up in rows. She also fabricated little notebooks into which she entered her daily observations (Schmidt 127). She wrote miniature letters greeting her imaginary friends and congratulating them

on the carefree life they were able to spend in her fantasy land.⁸ She copied and recopied those letters and finally entrusted them to the wind.

I was always sure to find the messenger there, who would take and deliver my messages. It was most beautiful when there was a strong wind... With delight I entrusted my paper messenger-pigeons to the storm. I held them up and was happy when they were torn away and then appeared just as little white dots in the sunshine... They flew and flew -- and my thoughts with them. Who would find them? A man, a woman, a child? And they would ask, amazed, delighted: "Who is sending me this greeting? Who is writing such dear and beautiful things?" (MK 800).

She never told anyone in the family about this correspondence, out of fear to be ridiculed by those who were closest to her but understood her the least. "Perhaps I was guided by an undetermined fear, or a doubt, a put down, which would have shaken the filigran edifice of my dreams or would have darkened its sheen, even if with a breath" (MK 800). Marie had discovered herself and instinctively knew that she had to withdraw into a dreamworld in order to gain strength and to preserve her identity.

CHAPTER 2;

"ONLY A GIRL"

When Marie was nine she and Fritzi were taken to the Karl Theater from time to time, where her father had a box. The theatre, located in the Leopoldstadt, a suburb of Vienna, had been founded in 1781 by Karl Marinelli as Leopoldstadter Theater. In 1845 it was remodelled by Karl Bernbrunn and reopened under the name of Karl Theater. It became one of the most popular theatres in Vienna, due to its much appreciated comic repertoire and its outstanding actors (Nadler 300). Long before taking the girls to actual performances, Baron Dubsky had often told them about his favourite comedy writer Ferdinand Raimund, and about one of his most beloved protagonists Herr Rappelkopf. Marie's favourite of Raimund's works was Mädchen aus der Feenwelt, a play which stimulated her to start writing theatre pieces. "Totally intoxicated I came home; the direction in which my fantasy would henceforth stretch its wings was decided. I became inexhaustible in inventing theatre pieces..." (MK 809).

Ever since her first governess, Mademoiselle Hélène Hallé, had taught her French, Marie had started to write French verses and had continued to compose her poetry in this language, even after Hélène had left the family. The letters Marie had entrusted to the wind to carry to her imaginary friends beyond the mountains were also in French and now, having also composed hymns to the Virgin Mary, Marie invented stage plays which she performed with her sister and some playmates. In Meine Kinderjahre Marie Ebner records that she once played the part of an old

wrathful uncle who later revealed himself as a harmless, warm-hearted man. She much amused her audience with her temper tantrums but especially aroused their laughter when she cried real tears out of offended pride (810).

Soon, however, the other children tired of these plays and Marie, the initiator of the performances, was again left alone and had only her little notebooks to which to confide her verses. "My theatre pieces, thought out in bright enthusiasm, shared the fate of my poems -- nobody wanted to listen to them. Thus my little copy books became once more my only confidants" (MK 811).

For a while she kept quiet about her poetic endeavours, yet she needed an audience and hoped to find understanding from Fritzi. But she also proved to be a disappointment. As long as Fritzi thought Marie had memorized someone else's poetry she thought it beautiful, but as soon as she learned that her sister was actually reciting her own verses, she found her "queer" and entreated her to give up this "strange" occupation (MK 808). As Ebner-Eschenbach records in her autobiography: "I believe that a dark suspicion told her that to make verses was a dangerous thing which one should better not attempt. She never asked me to recite my poems a second time and anxiously avoided every discussion" (808).

Yet Marie always remained very close to her sister. In spite of Fritzi's lack of enthusiasm for Marie's poetic outpourings she remained her best friend, perhaps because she complemented Marie's temperament. Fritzi was beautiful, shy, timid, submissive, accomplished in the skills expected of a young lady, and she usually did what Marie wanted her to do. In spite of strong misgivings Fritzi had "celebrated" mass with Marie that



Marie Dubsky with her sister Friderike in 1836

time and had been her faithful attendant (MK 803). The two had often played with dolls together and once, suspecting that the dolls had been stolen by a woman in the neighbourhood, they tried to throw ink at her from their window (MK 774).

Yet the two girls, being so close in age, were also rivals. In Meine Kinderjahre Marie Ebner admits that she was not "as beautiful and radiant" as Fritzzi (MK 565) and that her sister, being a much better student in virtually all the academic and artistic subjects, received much higher marks for her conduct and achievements. But Marie soon tried to establish her own identity over against her sister. After a beloved governess, Marie Kittl, had left the family and the two girls still hoped she would soon return, Marie decided that if Fritzzi would show her joy and relief she would pretend indifference, in spite of her perhaps even more burning desire to be reunited with the departed teacher.

Oh the dear one! She would stand there, reach out with her arms, unable to speak with emotion. My sister could run towards her, shouting for joy, wet with tears of happiness. As far as I was concerned, I was determined to control myself, putting to shame the proudest Spartan woman -- I would betray nothing of my happiness (MK 844).

By measuring herself against her sister, Marie found out what she was not: she was not compliant, not submissive, not interested in typical "womanly skills", and not timid. The "de-identification" worked, Marie found her true self in the process without disrupting the bonds of blood and affection that tied her to her siblings.

As Fritzzi and Marie grew older, the differences in their characters became more sharply defined and each reacted in her own way to the experiences of everyday life. But they always remained close friends. Later, when married to Count August Kinsky, a member of a very

prominent Moravian family, and living on her estate in Bürgstein, Fritzi would attend performances of Marie's plays in nearby Prague and keep her informed about their reception. Marie regularly visited Fritzi and helped out when her children were ill. Her diary entries of these visits reveal how close the sisters were also in later life. Once Marie confided: "My sister Fritzi is a saint. Claudius once said 'I have never known a saint who was a good person'. He did not know my sister Fritzi" (TB I 196).

As a ten-year-old girl Fritzi may, however, have been jealous when she realized that the younger sister could compose verses, a talent denied to her. As the oldest of the Dubsky children she may have tried to surpass Marie and may have believed she could claim seniority rights. After the birth of Maman Eugénie's last child the two girls vied for its possession and Fritzi felt that she should own the baby because she was the older of the two (KL 273).

Fritzi also knew that her family did not appreciate Marie's writing poetry. If her friend Fannie's mother allowed her to write stage plays and was even proud of her daughter's talent, in the Dubksy family things were different. Aristocrats generally thought little of people who indulged in composing verses, and her father especially abhorred people with an intellectual bent. In the preliminary sketch to her autobiography Marie would later admit: "He was a decided enemy of all book learning and he lived in the belief that it was lurking behind the door when one took a book in hand, ready to jump at any moment, turning a practical person with common sense into a stupid scholar" (Schmidt 130). He wanted his daughters to be educated in the accomplishments that befitted their station

and later on to make a desirable marriage. Fritzzi therefore implored her sister to stop writing poetry. As Marie Ebner recalls in Meine Kinderjahre:

She gave me one of her pretty, sad sermons, which came from the depth of her warm, pious and loving heart. She became so sad and finally broke out in such hot tears that I, moved and touched, took a heroic decision and promised her not to mention any more when "it" began to compose in my head and when I was tempted to do so I would pray earnestly for strength to resist (811).

As much as Marie tried to deny her self and to pray for release from her creative urge, her longing to become a professional writer increased. One winter Sunday after mass, when Marie was with her grandmother at the Rabenhaus, she confessed that she wanted to devote her life to writing:

Suddenly all my good intentions were forgotten, everything that I had promised my sister and that I had vowed to myself. I only knew that everything had to be said and sung, everything that sounded and resounded in my heart, to the delight of others, for my own fulfillment (MK 813).

She told Grandma Vockel that she wrote poetry and that she aspired to a professional writing career. The result was as unexpected as it was devastating. Baroness Vockel, usually calm and lenient, interrupted her, made it clear that she was bitterly upset and told Marie to leave the room. In her eyes it was a sin to want to do something that was not in keeping with traditional aristocratic convention. Marie never understood why her grandmother had become so angry and why she had treated her as if she had done a severe wrong.

Baroness Vockel's behaviour showed the extent to which aristocratic prejudice against women's writing endeavours had taken root. Writing poetry and going public with it was not considered respectable in her circle and if an aristocratic woman tried to do it, strict measures had to be taken. Baroness Vockel may have believed, as many did in her time,

that women who busied themselves with intellectual occupations ran the risk of becoming barren. Another notion was that women who wrote professionally were considered almost like whores, who sold themselves with their publications. For an aristocrat exhibition in public life was considered a taboo.

When Baroness Vockel had grown up in the eighteenth century, the majority of women were excluded from higher learning and were relegated to the home and the religious sphere. Her life had been spent looking after her family, knitting for the poor, helping her husband and later also her son-in-law with the administration of the estate. On Sundays she had read and still did read in her devotional books. That her little granddaughter wanted to deviate from this aristocratic lifestyle must have appeared to her like a crime. She further may have feared that her granddaughter might remain single, another severe wrong in the eyes of an aristocrat, to whom the propagation of the family was of the utmost importance. She knew that the aristocracy could only exist if women behaved traditionally and assumed the role of wife and mother. Finally Baroness Vockel may have been shocked to find out that Marie had other than normal womanly interests. She knew that this would entail suffering in a society that largely denied women's individuality and placed the highest importance on their function as mothers. A woman who broke out of her conventional role ran the risk of being ostracized. Seeing her grandmother's indignation, Marie was desolate and felt stigmatized. In her anguish she turned to God for help:

If only heaven would have pity on me and delivered me from this sinfulness, or whatever it might be. Deliver me, deliver me! I cried to the Almighty, and to Him and my most loyal

friend, my sister, I was looking for help in my confusion, which came quite close to despair (MK 814).

Yet Fritzi could not help. She begged Marie not to talk about her "problem" anymore, hoping it would vanish. She, like Grandma Vockel, now began to consider Marie's urge to write as an incorrigible evil.

Marie's memory of this tragic time is revealed in the description of Edinek of "Unverbesserlich", where Emanuel, the priest tells him that there is no such thing as an "it". He insists that human beings have a free will and are able to master their nature. And Edinek, overcome with remorse, concedes: "It may be true, people may be right who call me a son of hell... It may be the case, the damned thing which compells me must be the devil" (196). Like Edinek, Marie could not deny her nature. "It" did not disappear and Marie came to accept it as her fate. Gradually she saw herself chosen by God for martyrdom from which she derived strength and also a certain vanity. She then wrote secretly, creating her own imaginary world. The self that was denied her by her family came to life through her writing. Henceforth she would lead a double life.

In 1841 the fifty-seven year old Baron Dubsky married for the fourth time. His bride was Xaverine Kolowrat-Krakowsky, a descendant of an old aristocratic family and twenty-four years his junior. Grandma Vockel and Aunt Helene had been apprehensive when learning about his engagement and obviously were not happy about Baron Dubsky's choice of a wife. When he had asked the children how they would like a new mother, Marie spontaneously burst out: "Don't bring us a new mother, we don't need one" (MK 820).

The first reception Countess Xaverine Kolowrat-Krakowski received when she and her mother introduced themselves to the Dubskys was

decidedly cool. Grandma Vockel excused herself from the meeting. Aunt Helene gave them a lukewarm reception.

The relationship between the three ladies remained within the confines of cool courtesy and also towards us children the new step-mother did not show any special friendliness -- which was correct and sincere. "I take you over, as one takes over duties", her light blue eyes said, and how well did we understand! (MK 821).

Fritzi's reaction to the first encounter was: "If only there were not five of us!" (MK 821). After the wedding which took place in Vienna, Baron Dubsky brought his new wife to Zdislawitz where the couple arrived after a two-days drive in very bad weather conditions. Xaverine, not used to her new husband's temper, got the first taste of his irascible and insensitive ways. She aroused his anger, because she feared driving in the dark on soaking wet dirt roads and screamed when the horses got stuck in the mud. Marie Ebner records in her autobiography her stepmother's arrival as a newlywed:

How damp Mama's dress was hanging down on her, and her face too was quite damp; we had noticed it when she kissed us. She had cried. "Naturally, because she was afraid", Fritzi, who had the sincerest understanding for each and every anxiety, explained. After a while -- I had thought that she slept already -- she began again: "A honeymoon... It is sad, such a honeymoon" (826).

Xaverine's arrival in tears was a bad omen. Not only the trip from Vienna to Zdislawitz at Baron Dubsky's side -- honeymoons were not the fashion at this time -- but her whole life with him were to be marked by quarrels and bitterness. The children, long used to Aunt Hélène's depression, now would have to get accustomed to their stepmother's tears.⁹

We often found her in tears. She suffered from homesickness, she suffered under the difficulties of her position. At one stroke blessed with five children, the fourth wife of an elderly, almost strange man, reminded by her surroundings, by everything before her eyes of her predecessors, to be



Entrance gate to Zdislawitz Manor

compared with them -- not always favourably -- and not to lose one's good cheer -- that would have taken a lot! (MK 826).

As it later turned out Xaverine and Baron Dubsky were not compatible. Their relationship may have been recorded in the story "Der Herr Hofrat", where the protagonist's marriage had been a battle "from the start."¹⁰

Two equally strong individuals were facing each other and fought for the same right, the right to develop according to their own, innermost law....The hours of warm tenderness were followed by days of resentment, of rebellion. Be different! he demanded of her, she of him, don't blame what I admire and don't ridicule what I adore... There were soft hours when love spoke: "bend down, accommodate, deny yourself". And it happened, but at the expense of sincerity; it was a lie and the price was too high, the lie had its revenge. The quarrel became ever meaner and uglier (458/9).

How much Marie suffered from her parents' marital rows and her father's irksomeness is revealed in the diaries she wrote in the 1860's. Time and again she pitied her stepmother whose nerves suffered badly in her unhappy marriage. On April 24, 1865 we read : "Poor mother! She was asleep when I called on her before noon. How tired she is, how she suffers! Her nerves have been excessively sinned against" (TB I 45). On March 14, 1867 she writes: "(I stayed) all day long with my parents. Oh, how sad it is there. Poor Papa so restless, poor mother so tired and tormented" (TB I 163). The entry of December 29, 1867 reveals: "... poor good mother, she is carrying a heavy cross" (TB I 215). And after Xaverine's death in 1869 we learn : "Early in Papa's apartment. I was deeply moved to enter these rooms again. How much our poor mother suffered here! How heartbreaking is the thought of her" (TB I 281). Years later she noticed her brother Victor's similarity to her father and remarked in her diary: "How he resembles poor Papa: There won't be peace in his house. It will be difficult to feel comfortable at his side if this continues"

(TB II 423) The situation in her parents' house was often so bad that Marie hated to go there. No wonder that her work abounds with unhappy couples and with wives whose husbands torment them with their constant quarrelsomeness.¹¹

"Mama Xaverine", as she was called by the children, felt superior in rank to the family into which she had married. She slowly transformed the household into one that expressed the values of the social stratum from which she herself had come. She placed great emphasis on social graces, proper entertainment, cultivation of the talents d'agrément, which she herself possessed. She enjoyed singing and had the older girls accompany her on the piano, when she performed French songs. She also had a talent for painting. Her oil paintings -- scenes from the castle and courtyard she had grown up in -- delighted the children and served as an inspiration for their own drawing skills.

Xaverine also introduced changes in the girls' education. The old dance master, Monsieur Minetti, had accompanied them on his guitar while they practiced Spanish dances in order to entertain their father on his birthday. He was replaced by an elegant young French woman who started by teaching them manners. Marie who hated dancing already as a child and who would avoid balls as best she could, later recalled the French woman's lessons:

She let theory precede practice. One could have called her definitions of the various kinds of greetings almost witty. At the end came the often repeated words: "O my young ladies, you must know this well, if you want to possess good manners. Good manners matter a great deal and are almost everything. If Napoleon had had good manners he would have been a very great man indeed" (MK 829).

Dancing was considered a means to shape the female body and the better it was trained the more perfect a girl's sensitivity was thought to develop (Kössler 48). Xaverine also hired a new piano teacher who, in contrast to the first teacher, Frau Krähmer, taught the girls potpourries from operas instead of serious classical music. The time was past when Frau Krähmer hit Marie's finger with the ivory stick when she played a wrong note:

The ivory stick struck, with an accuracy that never failed and with a force that never let up, the finger that had become guilty of straying from the right key. It hit the knuckles so hard that it rattled, and it flew immediately up to the notes again, and one was supposed to distinguish those notes clearly while one's eyes swam in tears (MK 788).

Treatment like this could not turn the children into enthusiastic musicians. Although Marie had a good ear for rhythm and would later enjoy her husband's house-music evenings, music never played a prominent part in her life. She seldom went to opera performances and rarely attended concerts. Theatre and visits to art galleries were much more important to her. Given the fact that Vienna in her time was the musical centre of the world and attracted some of the greatest composers, we learn little about this in Ebner-Eschenbach's work. We know, however, that in 1847, when the famous singer Jenny Lind performed in Vienna, Marie attended her concert and received an autograph as well as a kid glove from her as a token of friendship.¹²

When reminiscing in her autobiography about the changes in her education which her stepmother had effected, Marie Ebner sounds rather sceptical and claims that from the more solid they had moved to the flashy and superficial (828). Yet she gives Xaverine credit for introducing her to literature, and especially to German poetry. Anastasius Grün's "Der Letzte Ritter", a cycle of poems centering on the Emperor Maximilian I, had

a lasting influence on her. "I found this noble poem extraordinarily charming, and if the content formed in my mind only a diffuse picture, the verses penetrated my soul with resounding play and powerful rhythm" (KL 275). Stimulated by Grün, Marie started to compose her own verses and recited them with great pathos, unperturbed by Fritzi's criticism.

Marie also preserved a life-long gratitude for her stemother for giving her Schiller's complete works on her twelfth birthday. Receiving the oeuvre of her most venerated poet was for Marie "perhaps the most memorable event" of her childhood (MK 832). Unable to read at first because of sheer excitement, Marie kept her eyes glued to the precious book and instead of reading it, admired her hero's portrait on the cover. "The appearance so powerful, so full of greatness and strength and the beautiful head bent under the weight of the heavy wreath. Although the luxurious ornament was truly earned, it nevertheless now weighed him down " (MK 833).

When Fritzi saw her sister immersed in such raptures she teased her: "She thinks for certain that one day she will have such a wreath on her head and stand like this" (MK 833). All her life Marie would admire Schiller's work, his style, his themes, his ideals. Through him she became acquainted with "the world", with the working of politics, with conflicts outside the domestic sphere. His ethical values became her own and by him she saw confirmed what her father had taught her, namely that women's first duty was to obey. How much Schiller influenced her has filtered into "Bettelbriefe" where the countess states:

I did not even know that a woman could have a will of her own. Obedience was taught in the convent, and obedience was demanded by my uncle as my legally appointed guardian. Obedience is a woman's duty, said my adored Schiller (640).

In 1869, when asked to contribute a work to the celebration of the poet's one-hundredth birth-anniversary, Marie Ebner gladly obliged. And in old age, when repelled by modern literature because of its pessimistic and decadent worldliness, Marie Ebner would gratefully turn to Schiller, with whose principal values and conceptions of art she whole-heartedly agreed.

In 1843 Xaverine obtained an Imperial decree which conferred the rank of Count upon her husband, who by birth had only been a Baron. From now on the Dubskys adopted an aristocratic life-style over against the former rather bourgeois way of life and moved in higher social circles. Xaverine expected her first child at that time and hired a young nursemaid in place of Pepinka, who went into retirement.

Fortunately for Marie her stepmother also employed a new governess after she had learned how much the children had chafed under the regime of Mademoiselle Henriette. With Marie Kittl, the daughter of an Imperial Councillor and the sister of the director of the Prague Conservatory, a time began which Marie would later call the happiest of her childhood. In Marie Kittl's presence she found the peace and the understanding she otherwise missed in the family. "Like a little Isle of the Blessed the memories of the time, which we then lived through, stand out before me. It was the most beautiful, the most peaceful of my childhood" (MK 824).

Although physically not as attractive as the former governesses and of a rather stout and dowdy appearance, Marie Kittl, a woman in her twenties, immediately captured the children's hearts.

Her figure, as well as her hands and feet, had turned out somewhat broad. She was in her twenties but seemed much older. Her complexion was lacking freshness, her movements were without grace, her nose... no, I do not want to go into details. One could have criticized every single one of the features, while the general impression which the appearance

and character of Miss Marie gave, was highly sympathetic. A fine, noble, somewhat enthusiastic spirit shone from her short-sighted eyes and soon it became a matter of honour for us to see them rest with approval upon us (MK 821/2).

She was young enough to seem a comrade and old enough to be a source of counsel and to provide a stable basis for the children. Their interest always came before her own. She sang with them, had them recite poetry, took part in their games and watched over them when they were sick and convalescing. Marie was particularly close to her because she understood her literary ambitions. She poured her soul out to her new governess and confided to her all her secret longings. Finally she had found a kindred spirit to whom she could express herself spontaneously and unreservedly, and she always knew that she was understood.¹³

I could tell her everything; I could come to her with all my doubts and worries. The smallest thing that occurred in my small world of thoughts was important to her. She took everything seriously that I took seriously, stupid as it might have been. She never used the weapon of derision, which grown ups are so fond of using against children (MK 883).

Unfortunately Marie Kittl left the Dubskys after only two years, because her father and her brother in Prague had caught typhoid and she had to nurse them. As at the time when Anischa, the nursemaid, was leaving, the children were told she would surely come back, yet nothing was further from the truth. The Dubskys, afraid that the governess could spread typhoid in their home, never asked her to return. Marie took it particularly hard that her parents had lied to her. "Did these people not know better than to lie to us and cheat on us? How could they keep us in such suspense, and let us live a whole year in the hope of our friend's return, while she had long been torn away from us?" (MK 844). While Marie and Fritzi had still been hoping to see their beloved governess

again, Marie Kittl had already accepted a position in Paris in the house of Princess Arenberg. Later she became governess, reader and companion at the Belgian court.¹⁴

Left alone in her family where nobody really understood her, Marie resorted to writing long letters to Marie Kittl, her confidante. "The correspondence we entertained was for me a support and a staff during an important time of transition. I talked about everything that happened to me, I reported every crazy idea, I received often well-earned admonition and accepted it without demur", Marie would later recall in her essay "Aus Meinen Kinder- und Lehrjahren" (276). Marie Kittl learned that her young, ambitious friend intended to become "the Shakespeare of the nineteenth century" (MK 864) and that she was determined "either not to live or to become the most prominent woman writer of all nations and times" (KL 276), a message which filled her with great concern. Yet she never discouraged Marie from writing and even boosted her young charge's ego by calling her "une petite styliste... une jeune personne délicieuse" (MK 852), and Marie tried to do her best, even exaggerating her accomplishments, to deserve Marie Kittl's admiration. When reading her letters to her confidante years later Marie Ebner felt embarrassed because she had boasted so much in order to make herself more interesting in the eyes of her beloved friend.

The more concern she showed about my well being the more I probably exaggerated, revealing the most ridiculous thoughts and feelings. Whatever the beginning of the tune might have been, its end surely always was: admire in me a child of extraordinary gifts and accomplishments, destined for great things (MK 852).

It was the time of puberty, a time when Marie often felt depressed and began to miss her biological mother.¹⁵ She had lost already many loved

ones through death or through their dismissal from service in the Dubsky household and tried to cling to something stable, something no one could take from her. Thus she began to focus more on her late mother to whom she had always felt close in spirit.

She had experienced how her friend Fanni's mother had encouraged her daughter to write stage plays and to cultivate her creative drive. She had learned that in her family these things were frowned upon, because the Dubskys were members of the aristocracy. She also began to realize how much she longed for her biological mother, who surely would have understood her urge to write. Something of this longing has been recorded in Unsühnbar where Marie Dornach says to her late mother: "You would have been happy with me... You would have known that I only needed to want it to become an artist. But I shall not want to, I must not want to. Someone like us must not do such a thing. Would you have agreed, mother?" (369).

Her biological mother, artistically gifted and intellectually trained by her father, would have understood Marie. Had she been alive, the loneliness and isolation Marie more and more experienced would have been spared her. In her letters to her former governess Marie often expressed her sorrow about not having known the bliss of having been raised by her biological mother. She also felt that she had been destined before her birth to become a martyr (B II 79). Although Marie Kittl tried to comfort her as best she could, her young friend still continued to crave for her late mother. In "Ein kleiner Roman" Marie Ebner would later express the deep conviction "Nobody on earth can replace a mother. Nobody!" (9).

And in her novella Margarete she would claim that a motherless child cannot even be happy in the hereafter (136).

In many of Ebner-Eschenbach's stories and novellas where young girls lose their mothers, they are deprived of the love and emotional support which would have made it easier for them to take important decisions. These girls, as the protagonists of Bozena, Unsühnbar, "Rittmeister Brand" and "Oversberg" are then totally under the control of tyrannical fathers who exert their patriarchal rights and force them to succumb to their selfish wishes. In "Schattenleben" Marie Ebner refers to her "poor, motherless childhood" (464) and wonders how she could have been so cheerful at times without having a reason for it. After Marie Kittl's departure there was no one left in the family in whom she could confide her deepest longings.

In later years Marie visited her former governess and confidante in Prague, where she had retired and where she tried to follow what she thought her true vocation: writing. Marie Kittl had sacrificed her position, her savings, her reputation for a wrong perception of her true self. In her autobiography Marie Ebner sadly recalls how her friend had published book after book at her own expense, deaf to all suggestions and admonitions, hoping that the breakthrough would come one day: "She suffered the most bitter fate that I know of: she carried a burning wish in her soul which could not be fulfilled" (868). The sad experience regarding Marie Kittl's obsession with writing is reflected in "Wieder die Alte", where Ebner-Eschenbach has Bretfeld say: "Luckily I am not obsessed by the hot and demonic ambition which is often paired with insufficient talent" (107). Similar dilettantes as Marie Kittl are mentioned

in "Bertram Vogelweid", yet they, in contrast to her, listen to reason and their friends' well-meant advice.

Once Marie Kittl had left the Dubskys a strange procession of governesses moved through Marie's life. A well-mannered but extremely vain and lazy Bohemian lady was followed by a kind but uneducated French woman, of whom Marie had the following to say:

Already after the first classes she gave us I noticed that she far surpassed me as far as ignorance was concerned. Her acquaintance with geography and history was of a comical poverty. Of grammar she only knew the name. In order to correct our dictations she had to take recourse to the book from which she had read to us. I asked her whether she could not freely correct and she answered without any inhibition: "Ma foi, non"! (MK 839/40).

The fate of this governess, whose parents had bequeathed to her and her brother a considerable liability after their death, has been recorded in "Wieder die Alte" where Claire, the governess, allows herself to be exploited by selfish aristocrats in order to pay off her parents' debts.

Since it was the fashion in Austrian aristocratic circles to speak English in the context of riding and horse racing, the young countesses received some lessons in this language. Marie Kittl had recommended an English woman who had taught at a college in England and was married to an executive of an English company in Vienna. When Marie and Fritzl learned that the English teacher also taught the celebrated comedian Louise Neumann, they were in raptures and began to venerate the teacher for actually being able to meet the Burgtheater star. One day the girls asked the teacher to deliver a note to Louise Neumann, which she promised to do. The children then waited anxiously for a reply, that never came. The English teacher finally excused this by stating that the actress was far too busy to write.



Louise Neumann, drawing by Kriehuber 1853

Yet one day the English woman had a cold and carried more handkerchiefs in her handbag than usual. By accident the handbag burst open, scattering all the children's undelivered letters on the floor. Marie and Fritzi were aghast at that deception; yet the teacher did not even find it necessary to apologize. Marie later remembered with sadness that so much love and pain had been wasted -- for nothing.

It fell heavily on my heart and occupied my thoughts: how can something have been in the world -- for nothing? Here we had a case, that something had happened which, properly speaking, cannot happen. It appeared to me as a contradiction and a cruel thing (MK 843).

Incidents like this made an indelible impression on Marie and entered the life of her imagination. She would never forget how much injustice she had had to endure from adults who were totally oblivious to a child's sensitivity.

She realized how little respected children were in her society and how vulnerable they were in their dependence on ruthless superiors. Once she had experienced how a serf had been severely beaten by an agent on her father's estate. She had rebelled against this abuse by screaming and throwing a fit, to no avail. She had been helpless in the face of injustice and although she would have liked to slap the brutal man, she knew that she would have been punished for it. Adults were always in a stronger position (KL 274/5).

Since Marie could not slap her dishonest English teacher she could try to castigate her with words, but even this did not make an impression.

The incredible woman, caught in a long series of betrayals, did not for a moment lose countenance. She immediately turned the tables and asserted that she was ashamed of our silliness. How could we ever have believed that she would ask a famous artist to waste her time with reading letters children wrote to her (MK 842).

In later life Marie would never treat children condescendingly. On account of the deep hurt she had endured in those early years she always empathized with the little ones. She made it a point in her fictional work to try to penetrate a child's soul and to understand his psychology. Her work abounds with very sensitive and artistic children who are tyrannized and misunderstood by narrow-minded adults. The most tragic case is Georg of "Der Vorzugsschüler" who ultimately seeks death in order to escape his brutal and ambitious father.

Marie must have felt vindicated when she finally had the opportunity in the 1850s to meet Louise Neumann personally. The two became great friends. The famous actress later married a Count Schönfeld and the couple henceforth were close friends of the Ebner-Eschenbachs. On the occasion of Louise's eightieth birthday Marie Ebner, twelve years her junior, dedicated a poem to her in which she praised her as a great artist and friend.

The ignorant French governess was followed by a young German girl. Fräulein Karoline was well versed in the subjects she taught, yet Marie had an irrepressible urge to make life difficult for her. She still felt very hurt that Marie Kittl had been dismissed and the experience with the dishonest English teacher had likewise left a scar. Thus poor Fräulein Karoline became the scapegoat for Marie's revenge. The favourite battleground was history, where the fourteen year old had acquired a solid knowledge and could challenge the governess. Marie made it a point to admire the very people Fräulein Karoline considered villainous, and she ran down those that her teacher praised as heroes. Fräulein Karoline had indeed a most trying time with her rebellious student, but gradually

managed to win her over through patience and kindness. In later years Marie Ebner still felt ashamed about how she had behaved toward this young and bashful girl.

Miss Karoline was noble and good. She forgave me everything. She did not hold against the adult what the child had done to her. But I do not feel relieved by her generosity. Even today I blush for shame when I think of the bad tricks which I played a harmless and helpless creature (MK 845).

These rows with the pitiable governess left a lasting impression on Marie, so much so that she recorded them in modified form in several stories. Marie, the second daughter of Count Meiberg of "Wieder die Alte" bears a striking resemblance to Marie Dubsky of that time. Like her she challenges her governess, behaves rather aggressively towards her, but ultimately repents and, eager to be reconciled with her, confesses shamefacedly: "I have never loved a person more than you, please do count on me from now on " (141). Josef of "Die arme Kleine" likewise is a sketch of Marie, as he torments his tutor, Herr Heideschmied. Again the teacher gains the student's pity and admiration through patience and kindness. Josef felt "a last surge of opposition against a warm, loving feeling, then came a complete submission. He ran towards Heideschmied and embraced him. 'You are a noble old man', he said, turned round and left the room with large, emphatic steps" (651).

As much as Marie later regretted her behaviour towards Fräulein Karoline and considered those rows with her as signs of immature antagonism, they sharpened her wits and forced her to study history in order to win her arguments. Thus the young governess helped her to arrive at an independent opinion and furthered her critical thinking.

Another teacher who exerted a lasting influence on Marie was Josef Fladung, a retired court official and a respected amateur mineralogist. She instantly took to him because of his friendliness, his humour and his impeccable manners.

Fladung's face was friendly and rosy. He had a very high smooth brow, which ended only in the neck by way of a slim crown of hairs. The eyebrows were indicated by a single upstanding hair on each side. He spoke sweetly and softly. He moved his black horn spectacles so far up that they contrasted sharply with his brow (qtd. in B I 38).

Marie's confidence in him was such that she showed him some of her secretly written poems. He was so impressed by her talent that he spoke to her parents, urging them to cultivate it. To have found someone who believed in her literary accomplishments was a great comfort for Marie at the time. Apart from her grandmother she had no confidante in her family and even with her she was neither allowed to talk about her poetry nor her dramatic efforts.

Yet one day Marie took heart and confessed to Baroness Vockel that she still wrote and, astonishingly enough, the old lady did not get upset anymore but warned her granddaughter to be "just prudent". In her autobiography Marie Ebner recalls: "Thus I was rid of the awful pressure on my heart which the consciousness had caused of secretly doing something of which she disapproved" (851). Grandma Vockel soon got very ill and died of pneumonia in the spring of 1844. How empty the Rabenhaus in Vienna now seemed without her cherished presence!

Marie was soon asked to catalogue the books her grandmother had left to her and Fritz, so that they could be sent to Zdislawitz. This was a task Marie thoroughly enjoyed. She read in her grandfather Vockel's Bible, she leafed through the works of Thomas à Kempis and Herder and

was captivated by a biography of Lessing. Reading the first chapter of his life suddenly made her aware how insufficient her own education was in comparison to Lessing's. "My high opinion of my own talent, of my eagerness to learn, of my urge to know experienced a pitiful blow by the comparison between myself and the child Gotthold Ephraim Lessing" (MK 876). He had been able to attend schools, he had studied the classics, had met important people from whom he could learn and benefit in his career. What would Marie have given "to be like him for just one day, for just one hour, to communicate with immortals as with friends and to enter into their shining world of thoughts" (MK 877).

Marie realized for the first time that boys were privileged because they received a much more thorough education than girls. When her brothers Adolph and Viktor were nine and eight they were sent to a boarding school to prepare themselves for their future careers. At that time Marie had been devastated and had written in her notebook: "The brothers are gone today. I have a pain in my heart which is square and has edges which are sharp. It also has spikes" (MK 832). At that time she thought it cruel of her parents to send the little boys away to strangers and to an institution they were frightened of. Now she envied Adolph and Viktor for having been given the chance to prepare themselves for a professional career.

They attended the Schottengymnasium which provided the most élite education in Vienna. It offered a humanities curriculum with emphasis on Greek and Latin for students, who were planning to enter university or to embark on a career in the professions or civil service. The course of studies also comprised German language and literature, history, geography,

mathematics, sciences, religion and the electives French and English (Rozenblit 101).

Yet Marie was "only a girl" and knew that such schooling was out of the question for her. Aristocratic girls did not attend schools but were educated at home and expected to forge bonds with other aristocratic families. Besides, girls were not admitted to institutions of higher learning because it was feared that they would distract the male students (Rozenblit 120).¹⁶

Marie became more and more painfully aware of the discrimination she had to endure. In her autobiography she reflects:

I was only a girl. How many things are considered unbecoming for a girl, improper, inappropriate. The walls grew sky high around me, walls between which my thinking and my expectations had to move, the walls which -- pacified me. Not a good word in this application. "Pacification" fits only the cemetery, in which the dead lie; the living are robbed of their peace, if they are confined within too narrow boundaries... They will attempt to break out, they will always assault the walls and believe: this time they will give way (877/8).

Her discontent with the superficial education she had received would later filter into many of her fictional works. In Aus Franzensbad she shows her contempt for aristocratic girls who have never learned to think. In "Komtesse Muschi" she ridicules the lack of knowledge these girls often display and in "Komtesse Paula" she criticizes aristocratic fathers for insisting on a superficial education for their daughters. In "Lotti, die Uhrmacherin" we likewise learn about the thin cultural veneer young Austrian countesses were given, when Halwig states: "They know something about horses in spite of a Maquignon, they talk like jockeys and -- are charming. - Yes, I must confess that I find them charming, although I do not have the slightest illusion concerning their stupendous superficiality"

(896). A girl who enjoyed reading and studying was derogatively termed a bluestocking and ran the risk of being ostracized and ridiculed as lacking elegance and finesse.

Yet Marie did not let herself be put off by such prejudice. She continued to cherish her books and devoured whatever works she found in her grandmother's library. There were the dramas of Shakespeare, Racine, Corneille, Goethe and Kleist and there was a work by Madame de Motteville which particularly fascinated her. Its hero, Cinq Mars, would preoccupy Marie's imagination for many years to come. Her mind was getting ready to build its own dwelling. The "covenant between herself and her talent" was concluded (MK 851).

CHAPTER 3:

"UNMISTAKEABLE TRACES OF TALENT"

Baroness Vockel's death had left a void in Marie's life, a void that could not be filled for a long time, since she had been of a rare species, a kindred spirit. After Marie Kittl's departure the children had attached themselves more to the grandmother. Now she was gone and the adults, who would henceforth take care of them, were only employed to give lessons, yet emotionally they remained aloof.

Count Dubsky, who had never much bothered about his children's emotional life and sensitivities, left their upbringing to teachers and governesses and was only concerned that they did their duty. Mama Xaverine in due course gave birth to a girl named Julie and a boy named Heinrich. According to aristocratic tradition, she entrusted the children to nursemaids and later to governesses and tutors, and therefore a close relationship between her and the children never developed.

Parents and children in aristocratic circles lived in different spheres. Social obligations played a prominent part in the life of adults, as Marie would later record in many of her works. Sarah, the protagonist of Das Waldfräulein is sent away to be brought up in the country so that her mother is free to dedicate herself wholly to her social commitments. Paula, the heroine of "Komtesse Paula" meets her mother only when the latter has some visitors to whom she likes to introduce her dolled up child. In "Ein kleiner Roman" the governess is instructed never to complain to her aristocratic employers about their child, since they do not want to be

bothered. The governess also has to get used to, and then finds it natural,

that a being that so completely looked like an angel as the countess did, could only breeze by as in flight, that one could not tell such a heavenly apparition: stay, let us have a look at you to our heart's delight. It would never have crossed my thoughts to impose upon her to sit in the nursery and to tailor dolls' clothes, to drive a top or to clean an ink-stained little finger after a writing lesson (11).

Marie missed the emotional closeness she had enjoyed with Maman Eugénie and with Grandma Vockel. She therefore valued all the more the opportunity to keep up her correspondence with Marie Kittl, to whom she poured out all her joys and sufferings. She often felt lonely, deprived of a kindred soul, who really was able to understand her ambitions and drives.

There are many lonely children in Ebner-Eschenbach's work, who all may reflect some of her own sense of loneliness in those years. About Rosa of Bozena the narrator says: "With what bitter pain did she feel the saddest of all kinds of loneliness, being alone among people who should be the closest" (111). All the more Marie attached herself to her brothers and sisters and the "troop of the seven upright ones" forged a bond which made them stick together throughout their life (KL 305). Adolf and Viktor regularly came home from their boarding school for feast days and for the summer holidays, which the family spent at their country estate.

Around the middle of May the Dubskys used to pack their suitcases and the whole household, together with the servants, was moved to Zdislawitz. The children especially looked forward to spending their holidays in the country. While they arranged their belongings they would sing verses Marie had composed to the tune of the old folksong "Da droben

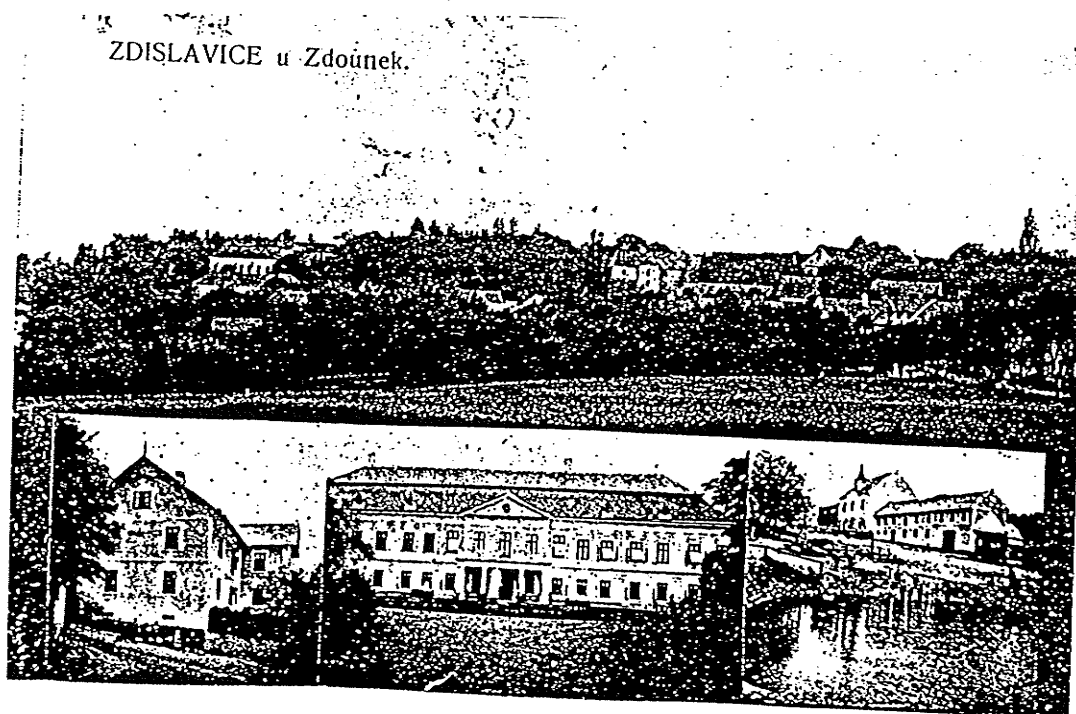
auf dem Berge" (High upon the mountain). To see their castle and the inhabitants of the village again filled them with great excitement.

In her novella "Ein kleiner Roman" Marie would later describe the trip from Vienna to the country which took three days and three nights. In those days they travelled in six coaches, each of which was drawn by four horses. "In front of each post station which we reached, twenty-four horses were standing ready to move us on. The drivers jumped from their carriages, unhitched the steaming, tired horses, and replaced them with fresh, well rested ones" (15). The arrival in Zdislawitz was always a special event.

What a crowd in the courtyard of the castle when our carriages arrived! What a shouting of welcomes and of assurances that one had hardly been able to await the hour of our return. No less cordial a welcome than by the people, was offered by homely well-known nature, the fields, the pastures, the flowering trees at the roadside, and by every reed and shrub in the garden. There was no more beautiful welcome than by that of our avenue of lindentrees, our favourite playground on hot summer days -- how eagerly I often wished to be a giant with enormous arms so as to be able to embrace all those tree tops and to press them to my heart (MK 784).

The park where Marie knew every bird and tree would always hold a special place in her heart. The castle, her "old nest", seat of her maternal ancestors, played an immensely important part in her life. In "Die erste Beichte" she describes it as follows:

The castle with its gardens was situated on a high plateau which offered a free view towards the South of the open country, the well cared for fields and meadows, watered by little rivulets. Towards the north it was bordered by a threefold chain of wooded mountains. A multi-turreted tower crowned the corner of the left wing of the castle, for which the steep walls of mighty basalt rocks served as an underpinning. Their dark pyramids emerged barren up here. Further down the valley they were overgrown with short but thick vegetation. Between their mosses and small shrubs rose



Postcard showing Zdislawitz Manor and village

single spruce and pine trees, the fringe of the nearby forest (475).

To promenade between the trees and to recite Schiller's verses was one of Marie's favourite pastimes. "How often those old, dear linden trees of ours had to hear the oak forest roar! How often did I call to them, who certainly marvelled at it, 'I have lived and loved' "(MK 833).

When Adolf and Viktor came from the boarding school to spend their summer holidays in Zdislawitz Marie would use every free minute to be with them and join in their games. When the Dubsky children played together on the sports grounds, the children from the village would come and watch them. Yet these onlookers were not always friendly. In "Die arme Kleine" a battle between the children of the castle and the village youth is described that may well have happened during Marie's summer holidays. The villagers trampled down flowerbeds in the castle garden and tore branches from the trees. They also threw stones at the boys in the courtyard, and a bitter fight between village and castle youth erupted. "Next day many youths in the village were walking about limping and with bandaged heads, and Heideschmied marvelled at the bruises which covered his pupils" (665). All the children enjoyed riding and they all participated in hunts. Yet Marie always pitied the animals and in later years tried to avoid hunting. Much of what she thought of chasing helpless deer has found its way into the description of a hunt in Unsühnbar.

The ground is filling up with dead, dying, mutilated animals. They fertilize the soil with their blood; they are broken and strangled; the chasers tie their hindlegs and load their poles with the twisting loot. Marie had averted her eyes. Nausea, antagonism, wonderment filled her; those who found delight in the suffering of a poor creature were all good people (466).

Instead of chasing animals Marie liked to play with them and care for them. She was especially fond of dogs and birds and would later lovingly describe them in her work. She also enjoyed walking with Fritz through the woods and calling on relatives at a neighbouring castle. For the children the summer always passed too quickly and soon the boys had to return to their institute. Marie and Fritz were extremely sad when Adolf and Viktor left. In Meine Kinderjahre Marie Ebner recalls:

One more handshake, one more embrace, one more consoling word from Papa. "We shall see each other soon again". And off they were... We kept standing for a while in the courtyard, waving with our handkerchiefs when the carriage rolled out of the doorway. And those, thus disappeared into the distance, certainly turned back and told each other: There, you can still see the castle! Greetings fly back and forth through the air, greetings of a love which was rocklike, unchanged in changing life (858/9).

In late autumn the whole household was moved back to Vienna to the Rabenhaus, where the winter routine began. In Meine Kinderjahre Marie describes her home as follows:

Our house had the shape of a long tailed piano; its narrow end stretched from the Haarmarkt through two small lanes up to the so-called Rabenplatzl. There it towered above its two neighbours at the right and the left -- very ancient, large houses... It was not very gay and lively around here, least of all on Sundays, when the shops were closed (811).

The Dubskys lived on the third floor in an apartment which hardly allowed any sunlight to enter. Family life lacked harmony since it was overshadowed by Count Dubsky's ill humour and outbursts of temper. With his suspicion and lack of sensitivity he easily offended his family members and quarrelled with his wife, so that the marriage remained forever strained. Something of the couple's relationship may have filtered into "Glaubenslos":

In the short conversation between husband and wife behind each word mountains of accusations seemed to loom. How often there must have been similar exchanges before to irritate and outrage to such a degree as was evident. These same nerves, constantly pulled at in the same way, jerked traumatically at the slightest occasion, the wounds in the souls opened ever faster, were bleeding ever longer and never had time to heal (260).

Marie, being at a very impressionable age and by nature already extremely sensitive, suffered from the tensions in her family and would later record them in her work. In "Wieder die Alte" she describes an aristocratic family, where "the cheerful element was missing" and where the count "surrendered himself to his bad moods with the obstinacy of a child and the perseverance of a man" (138). Count Dubsky's ill humour was known and even proverbial in his circles, where, as Marie would later record in her diary, the saying went that "one does not marry a Dubsky" (TB I 79). When the family members were all together they were often bored; serious interests were missing and each one was afraid of making a remark which might arouse the Count's wrath. It is no wonder that Marie would later describe men mostly as exhibiting "Zorn" (wrath) and as being prone to outbursts of temper. The boredom which likewise must have deeply affected Marie is recorded in several of her works. Muschi of "Komtesse Muschi" states: "We are bored like mopes" (306) and in "Die arme Kleine" the narrator explains: "Boredom! Boredom! It was crouching with ashen wings on the ceiling and as soon as people entered the room it had chosen for its domicile, it let itself glide down the walls and fell on their chests" (622).

It was a convention in the Dubsky family to stay up till ten o'clock at night. Marie found this sitting around, only to fulfil a rule, very trying. Not interested in doing needlework, the usual pastime for girls and women,

and prevented from reading as much as she would have liked, she often felt frustrated. She considered these forced family gatherings, with their trivial conversations and desperate attempts to entertain each other, a sad waste of time. She would later pour out these frustrations in "Wieder die Alte" where Marie von Meiberg, sullen like her father, utters derogatory remarks about her family life (140) and also in "Die arme Kleine" where Aunt Charlotte can hardly wait to escape the rules of the house order.

The big grandfather clock at the buttress heaved to strike. "Friend, strike ten!" Charlotte silently called out to it, "announce the hour of liberation". Thus implored it struck -- but what? Measly nine strokes plus one. One quarter past nine. Three quarters of an hour had to be sat out and one had to pretend one could do nothing else. Why pretend? Because it is the custom of the house. -- What is custom? What is it that elevates even the most stupid instruction to a custom? Slavish and thoughtless clinging to it (624).

Despite the tensions in her family Marie preserved her happy disposition and could at times be exuberant without any apparent reason. She also had a very humorous way with which she sometimes offended people (MK 880). Many protagonists in her work have a vehement temper and may very well spring from Marie's own roots. She may have challenged her governess exactly as Marie von Meiberg of "Wieder die Alte" does, and she may have given her teachers, especially if she did not respect them, an extremely hard time.

After Fräulein Karoline, the teacher whom Marie had often defied and driven to despair had left, Fritzi and Marie were considered old enough to be without a governess. The two girls continued, however, to take music and drawing lessons. In Meine Kinderjahre Ebner-Eschenbach recalls an incident where a drawing teacher got carried away and openly admired Fritzi's eyes which he found "miraculously beautiful" (862). The children

considered this little indiscretion pardonable yet the chambermaid, who had been present to watch teacher and children, considered it her duty to report the incident to "higher authorities", and right away a new, much older drawing teacher was hired.¹⁷

One of Marie's drawing teachers was the painter Franz Alt, who soon became quite prominent in Austria. Marie was very fond of him. In later years she often visited his studio and bought his famous watercolours which she gave to friends as presents for special occasions. She signed her letters to Alt with "your former student and perpetual friend"(RV I.N.93.117). Franz Alt must have enjoyed working with a student as gifted for drawing as Marie. He trained her observational skills and taught her to study meticulously the objects she wanted to draw. She especially enjoyed producing sketches of the horses she liked to ride in Zdislawitz, but she also drew pictures of other animals. She likewise sketched the facade of her beloved manor house and several of its rooms (Gladt,"Skizzenbuch" 4).¹⁸ She further drew portraits of her sister Fritzti and of servants of the household, always trying to present them in as lively a manner as possible.

Marie's favourite pastime and an important outlet for her frustrations was the drawing of caricatures of people she did not like. Later she would vent her contempt and outrage through the written word. Then, in her teens, she voiced her disdain with the help of her drawing (Gladt, Waldfräulein 32). People whose attitude and notion she did not like invariably found their way as caricatures into her notebook. Therefore also some of her protagonists would later take to drawing as a means of venting their frustrations about their environment. Out of spite Muschi



Drawings by Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach

of "Komtesse Muschi" draws a caricature of Clara who dares to criticize her.

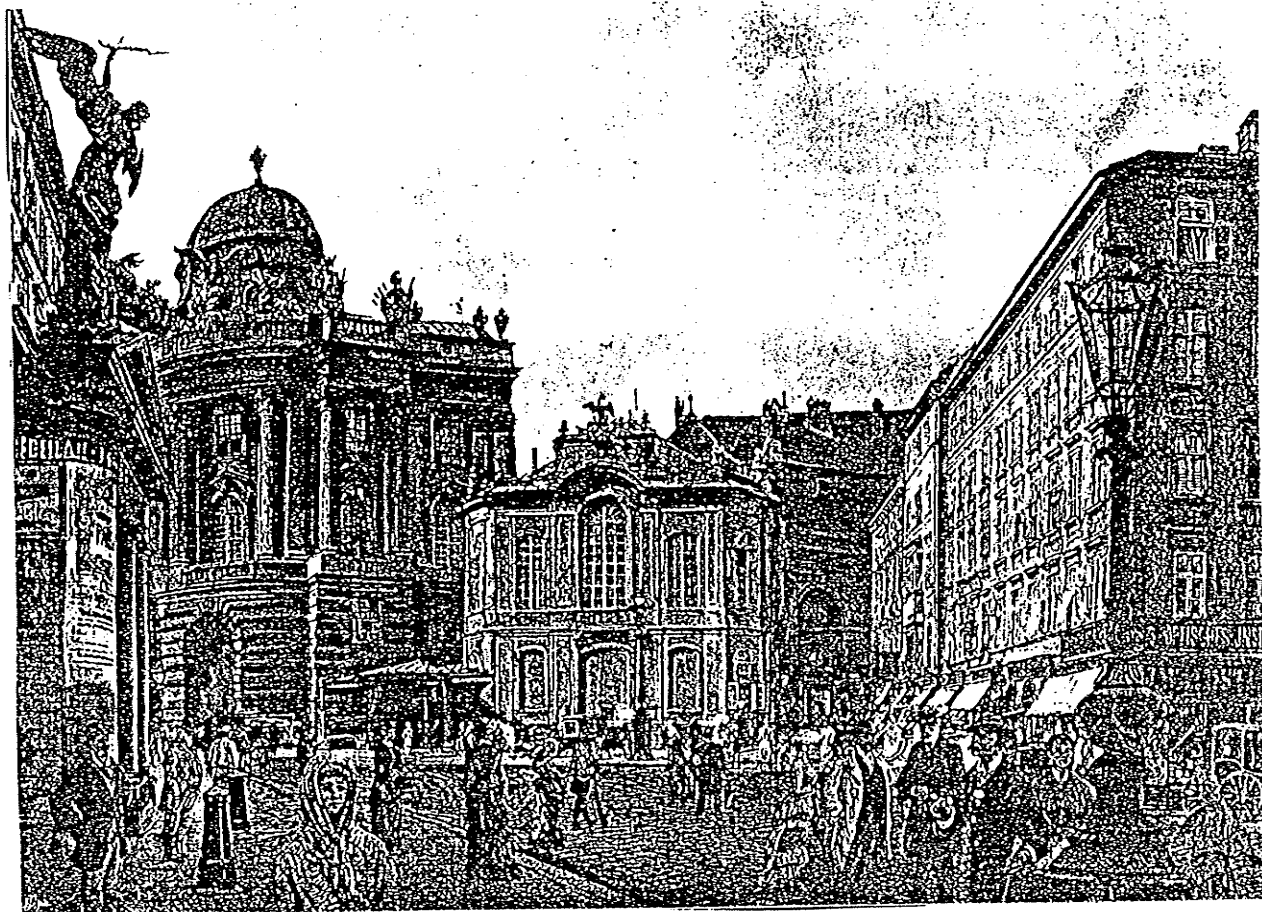
And in my first fury I sat down right then and sketched her as she presides over the sewing school which she established at home. Under each arm she has a book, and in one hand a switch and in the other a darned sock and on the tip of her nose, flattened for the purpose, a tiny weeny school child's dancing around. My caricature made the rounds of the drawing room, everybody giggled secretly of course and Nagel expressed displeasure, but very nearly burst out laughing (Harriman, Seven Stories 41).

Edith of "Das Schädliche" has "sharp eyes for all human faults, her own not excepted" (599) and a particularly great talent for drawing, which she likewise uses to produce caricatures of the people she knows. Her suitor states:

She had done a caricature of me, an ingenious one. It was a likeness which made me scream: my large nose, my broad mouth, my thick mustache. When contemplating this unflattering likeness of mine for some time I noticed the despicable expression which she had given me (585).

The highlight of Marie's life were the visits to the Burgtheater, then Europe's most prestigious playhouse. When she was twelve and Fritz thirteen, the two girls were allowed to accompany their parents every other day to the Burg, where the Dubskys had a private box.

The oldest Burgtheater had been established by Empress Maria Theresia in 1741 at the request of the court, whose members especially enjoyed drama, opera and ballet. Although constantly in debt and threatened by bankruptcy the theatre survived. It soon incorporated Italian comedy and pieces by the French and Spanish classics and in 1776 was transformed from a court theatre to a national theatre by Emperor Joseph II. He considered the theatre mainly a cultural and educational institution which he intended to use for his social reforms. Gradually the



The old Burgtheater: front

repertory was adjusted to the programme of the major stages in Germany and plays by Lessing, Schiller and Shakespeare found their way to the Austrian stage. Due to the talent and dedication of its directors and actors, many of them imported from Germany, the "Burg" developed into Europe's foremost theatre whose style, based on the "Hamburger Schule" became widely accepted and recognized (Lothar 33). Cultural life in Vienna soon centred around the "Burg".¹⁹

By the time Marie attended the Burgtheater it offered the most sophisticated performances. In Meine Kinderjahre she recalls:

We saw all the classical pieces that were performed in what was then the first German stage. We saw Das Leben ein Traum and felt transported into heaven by the elan of its verses, we saw Wallenstein with Anschütz in the title-role, Maria Stuart, Hamlet, we saw the prince in Emilia Galotti portrayed by Fichtner in such a moving and loveable way, that we sincerley wished old Edoardo should give him his blessing for his marriage to Emilia (834).

Those performances were great imaginative elements of Marie's childhood and youth. They gave her joy and furthered her aesthetic and moral development. Especially the tragedy with its passions, collisions, and its conflicts between good and evil characters, inspired her and made her want to act as heroically as the protagonists, with whom she deeply empathized. In a letter to Dr. Breuer she would write in later years:

When I saw a tragedy in my youth my pleasure consisted in imagining that I would behave equally great in all adversities as the heroes and heroines who acted before me. Is that not the real reason for the joy and elation we feel after the performance of a tragedy? (BC 38).

Yet she also immensely enjoyed comedies, among them plays like Die Stieftochter and Der Oheim by Princess Amalie von Sachsen and Pauline by the very popular dramatist Frau von Weissenstein. Marie's favourite comedienne was Louise Neumann. Together with her mother, the prominent

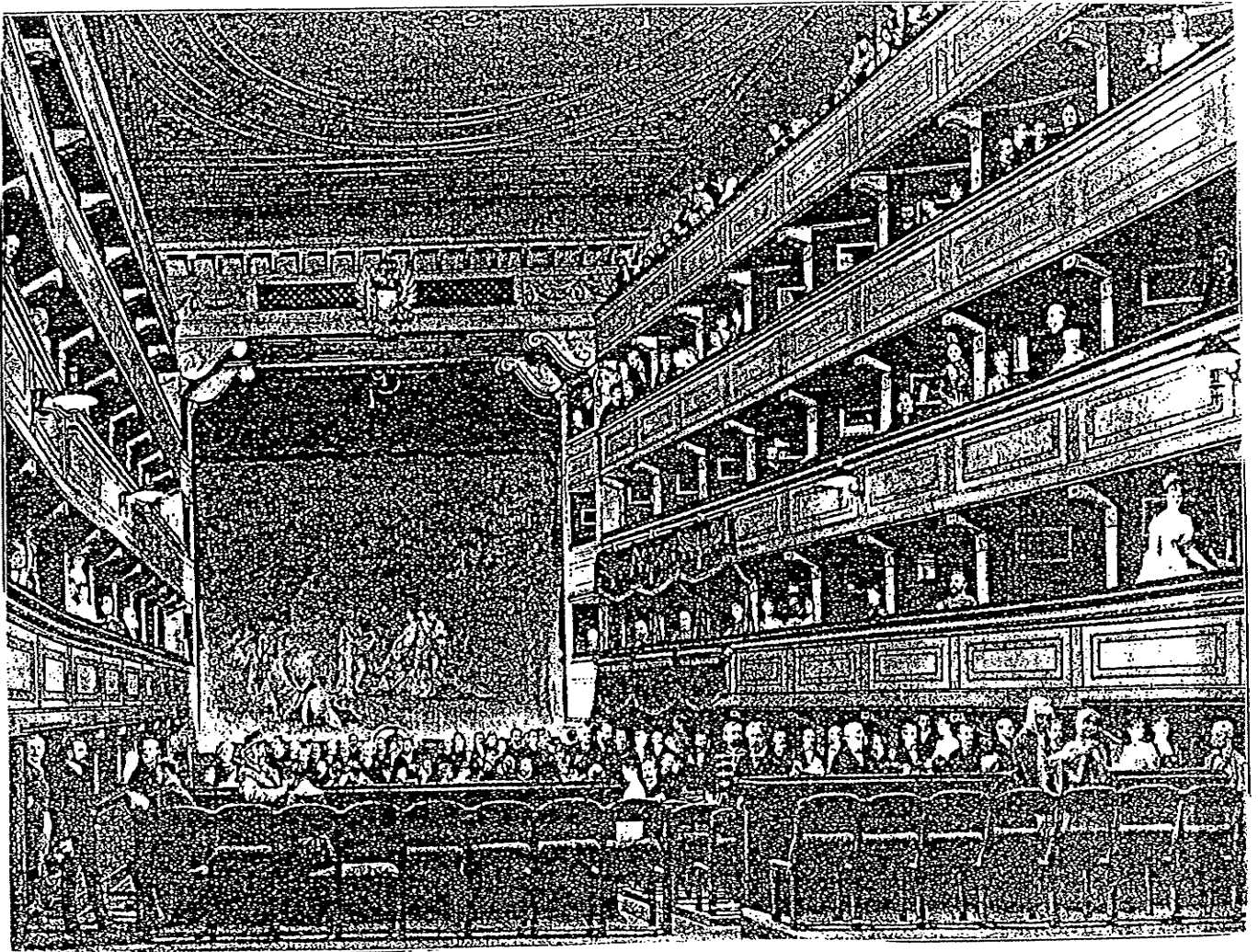
actress Amalie Haizinger, Neumann counted among the stars of the "Burg" in those days and was so much in demand that sometimes she gave more than a hundred performances per year (Lothar 106). She also was instrumental in helping to bring Heinrich Laube as director to the Burgtheater.

Another of Marie's favourite actors, who had already fascinated her grandmother's generation and who still performed to resounding critical acclaim, was Maximilian Korn, the paramour par excellence. In her autobiography Marie Ebner reports how Korn had conquered the heart of a young countess who offered to marry him. When he asked in his role as Hauptmann Klinger "And me, nobody wants to marry me?" the young countess from a box on the second floor courageously replied "I will". This provoked calls of "bravo" while she, shocked about the audience's response, tried to hide behind the back of her embarrassed parents (838/9).

Those Burgtheater performances strengthened Marie's desire to become a prominent dramatist. In "Aus meinen Kinder-und Lehrjahren" she recalls:

During some of those solemn evenings I sat on the little bench in the back of our box, my head afire, my cheeks aglow, one cold shower after the other running down my spine and I thought: before long your pieces will be performed here and your words will fly down from the stage like sparks. These were hours! Each one of them confirmed my conviction that I was destined to become the Shakespeare of the twentieth century (276).

The performances instilled ideals in Marie and gave her the strength to follow her personal goals. She secretly wrote tragedies, comedies, novellas and poems and learned in those years to keep to herself, since there was no one in her family who really understood her desire to write. The



The old Burgtheater.

subject matter that preoccupied her the most was the tragedy of Richelieu's erstwhile favourite and later enemy, Marquis Henri de Cinq-Mars, who had died on the scaffold. In Meine Kinderjahre she reports how moved and excited she had been after she first read the story of this tragic hero.

Everything that was alive in me, deification of the beautiful, contempt and hatred for evil and meanness, and not least of all, an exuberant sense of humour, through which I often provoked and offended, everything could be poured into this as into a golden vessel, shaped for me and for my sake. Cinq-Mars was my hero, the young, lighthearted, trusting favourite of Louis XIII, who wished to liberate his lord from the oppressive tyranny of the almighty minister Richelieu. He succumbed in the bravely undertaken battle against the giant and, after a moment of despondency, died magnificently (880).

Marie also ached to sketch the sovereign, King Louis XIII, with his infidelity and his narrow-mindedness. To delineate characters, to show their triumphs and their sorrows, to look deep into their psychological make up, was then as later her greatest delight. Especially Cardinal Richelieu provided food for her imagination, and fascinated her with his vanity and ambition, with his whole fear-inspiring personality. And finally Cinq-Mars', her hero's farewell from the princess who had loved him and from the woman who had been his mistress, gave her food for her imagination.

As with his foot he kicks away a life in which his ambitious dreams could not fulfill themselves. Absolved by the priest, edified by the piety of his friend he enters the place of execution. For this last appearance this man, this child, let himself be bedecked as if appearing at court. This heroic vanity was unspeakably touching to me and cost me many tears (MK 883).

For years Marie would labour over this tragedy until she finally burned it. Yet in those days, as a teenager "not the slightest fear of possible failure" (MK 884) overshadowed her confidence in her dramatic talent.

What cast a shadow over her dreams of becoming a professional writer was the fact that her family watched her growing interest in writing with open suspicion. To write verses for entertainment was allowed, to think of writing as a professional career was almost a crime, and nobody in her circles wanted to believe that she really had potential. As her nephew, Franz Dubsky, mentions in his "Erinnerungen" about his aunt's literary struggles: "Her first poetic works were also received by my grandfather with a great deal of distrust. He probably did not really expect anything from them and may not exactly have supported her writing" (Neue Freie Presse 17).

For Count Dubsky everything that contravened aristocratic tradition and convention was anathema. He wanted his daughter to grow up like all the other young countesses in his society and fulfill the duties expected of her as a future wife and mother. He thus imposed on Marie a role that was alien to her and forced her to lead a double life. In her sketch to her autobiography she later recalled: "Besides my genuine life I led an imaginary one which was perhaps more intense than the real one. It never occurred to me to tell one of my siblings or someone else about my dream creatures and of the beautiful world in which they moved" (Schmidt 129).

She learned, as many women writers had done before her, to hide her manuscripts "with a swift movement in the drawer" (B II 330) when family members appeared on the scene. Yet she bore these difficulties valiantly, determined to achieve her literary goal and to transcend the limitations of her society. The performances at the Burgtheater had shown her the greatness of suffering and of preserving one's integrity. As she remembers in Meine Kinderjahre: "I walked like the high personages at

solemn processions on the stage. Heroic feelings filled my heart. The will to suffer awoke in its full strength and with it the burning desire for a grandiose martyrdom" (836).

She was determined to preserve her self, as later many of her literary figures would. As the narrator says about Levin Bornholm of "Die Arme Kleine": "But he had saved something precious, faith in himself, absolute freedom, the strength to wage the war of defence, which makes up the existence of a man, who does not bow to any yoke of convention" (633). Writing was Marie's means to escape the oppressive reality in her parents' home. The many artistic children she would later describe in her work reflect her own situation as a teenager. Erich of Unsühnbar, vainly craving for his mother's love, turns to music for comfort and so does Georg of "Der Vorzugsschüler", when in times of despair he plays his beloved flute.

Lacking congenial friends and like-minded classmates with whom she could discuss her work, Marie regressed more and more into her inner life. Her day dreams gave her comfort and strength. As she would later record in the sketch to her autobiography: "At that time I discovered the delight of the inexhaustibly rich, healing, comforting art of dreaming. It remained loyal to me all my life" (Schmidt 133). Yet this did not change the fact that she felt lonely and misunderstood in her family.

It was particularly sad that Marie never had a warm and loving relationship with her second stepmother. Xaverine with her talent for singing and drawing, her taste for a refined life and her aristocratic connections could have become a role model for Marie had she not, in her stepdaughter's eyes, lacked intelligence. At sixteen Marie had developed

a very critical mind and a sharp eye for the flaws of those around her. Various diary entries of the 1860s reveal the contempt she had for her stepmother's intellectual mediocrity. On February 16, 1866 Marie Ebner, indignant about Xaverine's interference in Viktor's search for a bride, confided in her diary: "Mother enquired in all seriousness with Hanna E. whether she was inclined to marry V. A more frivolous, tactless, simple-minded woman the earth has never borne" (TB I 80). On September 20, 1866 we read in an entry from Zdislawitz:

I am often amazed about mother. She appears to me better, much milder. What she lacks is a clear sharp mind, her emotions are much richer than I had often thought. In the peace and quiet in which we live here -- thank God -- she is reflecting on herself, is giving herself account of her weaknesses. To improve at her age, that is something beautiful and commands respect (TB I 119).

A few days later, seeing how her ailing stepmother suffered, she wrote: "Our poor good mother is suffering and looks ill. I am concerned and I feel that often I had not known how highly she is to be regarded and I bitterly recriminate myself" (TB I 119). Yet the entry of April 22, 1867 again shows Marie's disdain for Xaverine's lack of intelligence: "She has, after all, much less intelligence than one would believe after the first glance, and even after the second" (TB I 171). Marie, from childhood on extremely bright and eager to learn, had soon intellectually surpassed her stepmother. The gap between mother and daughter widened over the years and Marie began to see in Xaverine a model she did not want to emulate.

Countess Dubsky-Kolowrat, as the descendant of a renowned Moravian aristocratic family -- the Kolowrats had provided the Empire with two prominent politicians²⁰ -- had received the upbringing typical for a girl of her class. She had been trained to move in highest social circles, to

be a hostess and to preside at official functions as a representative of the Austrian elite. Elegance and appearance were extremely important to her. But her stepdaughter did not share her values, since they seemed artificial and shallow to her.

Due to her marital problems Xaverine became a very unhappy and ailing woman. The many quarrels and rows she had to endure must have made her appear heartless and cold. Her refuge became the Church, her emotional outlet charitable work. Of her own children she preferred Heinrich, her son, and almost despaired when he, as a nineteen-year-old, joined the army in 1866 and she did not hear from him for a while (TB I 107). Yet with Marie, whom she found too blunt and too critical and whose humour may often have offended her, she never established a close bond.

Therefore the mothers in Ebner-Eschenbach's work, who lack deeper feelings and keep an emotional distance from their daughters, may very well reflect the relationship between Marie and Xaverine. Nanette Heissenstein of Bozena is confronted with an abrasive stepdaughter who resists all her pedagogical attempts and overtures (82), so that the two never come close. Paula's mother in "Komtesse Paula" prefers her dog to her daughter and is totally oblivious to a child's psychology (324). The mother of "Poesie des Unbewussten" goes so far in her lack of love for her daughter as to betray her to her son-in-law. She advises him to learn to deceive her daughter in order to govern her.

As far as dissimulation is concerned, I must say, if you cannot do it, you must try to learn it, because how do you want to govern if you cannot deceive? And to take a wife has meant to control her, as long as the world has been in existence (374).

There is not a single mother-daughter relationship in Ebner-Eschenbach's work that could be called intimate and loving. Beloved mothers are either dead or they are stepmothers of the girls in their care. In stories like "Nach dem Tode" or "Die Unverstandene auf dem Dorfe" where mothers and their biological daughters depend on each other emotionally the mothers act as an obstacle to their daughters' happiness.

Sorely missing parental love and understanding, Marie would later transform these feelings of loneliness and isolation in her work and express them through metaphors of coldness and hardness²¹, when describing the relationship between parents and children and between married couples. In "Das Schädliche" we learn that a "wall of ice" had built up between the parents and their daughter (590) and the suitor, listening to his future in-laws' complaints about their alienated daughter feels "frozen over" (590). In "Glaubenslos" the estranged husband resents it when his wife, having been deeply offended by him, says time and again: "I beg, you Ambros", because it felt "as if two ice-floes had crashed against each other, and it made him feel frosty and provoked him to an anger in which he poured forth the meanest defamations of his wife and of women in general" (260).

Mrs. Maslan of "Maslan's Frau", likewise deeply hurt by her husband, has become hard and unforgiving and her face bears an expression of "frosty bleakness" (485). The priest, trying to bring about a reconciliation between her and her husband, notices that "something insuperable stared at him from her stiff features, which looked frozen over" (486).

Xaverine's increasing bigotry which Marie, much more sceptical and down to earth, considered rather exaggerated, further led to an inner

estrangement of mother and daughter. In fact Xaverine's rather simple-minded religious faith may have rendered her even harder and more unforgiving. As Marie Ebner's narrator would later state about Maud of "Das Schädliche": "Maud, so excellent, so dutiful, so loving when she worshipped, was not without that kind of hardness, which seems inseparable from great piety" (598). With her penchant for gossip and disparaging other people (TB I 120) and her persistent efforts to convert Marie to her own understanding of religion, Xaverine could not but arouse her stepdaughter's contempt. After such an argument Marie Ebner once wrote into her diary: "... no faith, I? What an error, good God. Only one that is adequate for the greatness of Him to whom we both pray. How should I make you understand that, good dear mother?" (TB I 119).

Xaverine's intolerance in religious matters made a deep impression on Marie's mind. In later years she spoke derogatively about it to her relatives but found a deaf ear. In a diary entry of August 9, 1866 she mentioned during a visit with her cousin Marie in Hungary: "Unpleasant controversy with Marie because of mother. She does not accept the fact that I can criticize her without being spiteful" (TB I 112). Marie therefore had to vent her indignation by describing overly pious women in her work.

Paula's mother in "Komtesse Paula", in her eagerness to imbue her daughter with a devotion to Catholicism, decrees that Luther and the age of the Reformation be left out of her syllabus (323). She later dedicates her life totally to charity, goes to Church twice a day and reads only "pious books" (326), yet she does not show the slightest concern for her daughter's well-being. Status and appearance count more than anything

else. In "Das tägliche Leben" it is the mother's intolerance which makes life miserable for her talented and philanthropically oriented daughter, who finally can bear life with her uncongenial family no longer and commits suicide (632/3).

Marie and Xaverine obviously were no kindred spirits, but their behaviour towards each other remained polite, as each was eager to observe the proprieties. They read together in the evenings, and Marie always appreciated her stepmother's artistic bent. She also never forgot that she owed Xaverine one of the greatest joys of her childhood, the present of Schiller's complete works. And Xaverine also supported her stepdaughter's poetic talent in another important way. Having noticed Marie's love for reading and reciting poetry, having watched her creating verses and prose with remarkable ease, and having been urged by Mr. Fladung, Marie's teacher, to further her daughter's budding talent, the countess one day consulted Austria's foremost dramatist about her stepdaughter's work.

Franz Grillparzer, highly renowned in Austria and abroad, had been discovered in 1816 by Josef Schreyvogel, the director of the Burgtheater, who had advised him during their first meeting, to transform his novella "Die Ahnfrau" into a theatre play. After its successful performance at the Theater an der Wien, the drama was accepted at the Burg and henceforth Grillparzer wrote for Vienna's most prestigious stages. His Ahnfrau was followed by Sappho, Das goldene Vliess, König Ottokar, Ein treuer Diener seines Herrn and many others, all of which were played to capacity audiences and to rising critical acclaim. He travelled to Germany and Italy, met prominent artists and politicians and seemed destined to reach greater



Franz Grillparzer, drawing of F. Jagemann

and greater heights of achievement as court poet at the Burg. Yet at its first performance in 1838 his comedy Weh dem der lügt was rejected by the audience, whereupon Grillparzer was so deeply offended that from that time on he never again wrote for the stage (Nadler 355).

He continued, though, to publish poems in which he openly stated his dissatisfaction with Austrian politics. In 1847 he became a member of the Austrian Academy of Sciences. His judgement on drama and prose was widely sought not only by colleagues like Ferdinand Kürnberger and Ferdinand von Saar, but also by aristocratic ladies with a poetic bent.²²

When asked by Countess Dubsky-Kolowrat to evaluate some of Marie's poems, Grillparzer did not hesitate to come to the Rabenhaus in order to talk to her personally. Since the family was not at home he wrote the following letter:

Gracious Countess!

Yesterday I intended, having been previously prevented through my indisposition, to give myself the honour to personally call on you, but did not find you at home. Since I cannot dispose of my time for the next few days, I do not want to delay to express in writing my opinion on the poems of your respected daughter.

These poems reveal unmistakable traces of talent, a very felicitous ear for verse, power of expression, a perhaps too profound emotion, insight and a great gift of observation. Some of the present poems form an endowment which arouses interest and whose neglect of cultivating should not be left to the personal arbitrariness of its owner.

What is still lacking is that maturity which turns a poet into an artist, that thoroughgoing lucidity which transfers a thought to the listener without hindrance. Compared to young men at the same age, young women are usually several years ahead as far as intelligence and insight is concerned. Yet they are often lacking something which our sometimes humdrum methodical studies provide: order to thought. That is partly lacking in these poems, especially where they try to describe and where emotion blocks the event.

That much in general and in haste. Perhaps I will have the chance to add orally some detail to this.

With great esteem, devotedly, Grillparzer (RV I.N.6725).

Freudigste Grüße !

Ich wollte, früher hier irgendwas Angehöriges schreiben, wie ich
die Ihr geben. Wenn mein persönliches Interesse zu werden,
habe ich aber mich zu sehr, als ich hier die mich den Tag über
meine Zeit mich disponieren kann, will ich mich kümmern, Ihr jetzt
wenigstens herzlich meine Meinung über die Gräfinne Ihres Hofes
äußern.

Die Gräfinne zeigen ausserordentliches Interesse an der Kunst, die sich
glücklich oft für den Adel, gewollt das Aussehen, wie, Bildung,
wie zu ihrer, Empfehlung, für die und sprach auch für die
in einem der jetzigen Gräfinne, bilden sich zu einer Anzahl, die
jedenfalls sowohl in der Ausbildung zu erhalten, wie auch
in der eigenen Willkür der Befähigung haben könnte.

Und was heißt es für eine Sache, die in der Kunst und in der Kunst
muss, eine tiefgefunde Verstandlichkeit hat, die in der Kunst und in der Kunst
dort ist der Zeitgeist, als wäre sie das? / Aber nicht, ja, ja
freiergeizig sind jungen Menschen in gleichen Alter in der Kunst
und für die gewöhnlich sind "nur" das Jahr darauf, aber immer
folgt ihnen auch mit "nur" mit dem abgelebten, und so
Mutter geben: Bildung in der Kunst, deren folgt es den
Zeit, diesen Gräfinnen, natürlich so für die Bildung, die in
die Empfehlung der Begabung, so wie in der Kunst.

Es ist, in allgemeinen in der Kunst, Bildung ist und so
freiergeizig und nicht mindlich aufgetragen.
Grüßend

Freudigste Grüße
Grillparzer

With this letter Marie received the poet's consecration, a blessing which, by vindicating her in the eyes of her suspicious family, gave her the strength to continue writing.²³ Countess Dubsky-Kolowrat actually may have hoped Grillparzer's appraisal would be less positive, so as to provide her with authority to discourage Marie from her unfortunate bent for versifying.²⁴

When her daughter Julie, the youngest of the Dubksy girls, who had inherited her musicality and talent for singing grew up, there was never a doubt that she should remain an amateur and use her talent only for entertaining her family. A professional career as an artist was unthinkable for the Dubskys. They were aware of Marie's talent but wanted her to use it only for entertainment in the home. In her story "Die eine Sekunde" Ebner-Eschenbach has a young woman say to her artistic cousin: "That you have talent, everybody can see". He replies indignantly: "but I should not receive training...I should only do it playfully" (559).

Still, Countess Dubsky-Kolowrat cherished the contact with Grillparzer. A few years later, after a performance of his drama Esther, she sent him a flower bouquet as a token of gratitude for the "pure joy" she had experienced (RV I.N.80250).

Grillparzer's letter was indeed a great treasure for Marie. For years she had enjoyed the performances of his dramas at the Burg -- especially Die Ahnfrau had held her spellbound and "burned itself into the depths of [her] soul" (RV I.N. 54488)²⁵ -- for years she had read his poems and now he had deemed her own fledgling verses worthy of his praise. He became her idol, her role model, the hero of her dreams. With a trembling heart she hoped to meet him personally one day.

Finally, in the 1860s her long cherished dream came true. She was introduced to her idol by her friend Josephine Knorr. After the third meeting with him she wrote to Josef Weil: "How I worship him -- what a poor word that is for the rich emotion which it is meant to express -- I cannot tell you. The three times I saw him I shall never forget" (B II 122). By then Grillparzer had retired as Imperial Concillor. He had moved in with his beloved Kathi Fröhlich and her sisters and lived in the apartment on the Spiegelgasse, more or less like a recluse, offended and bitter, pondering his thwarted career as a dramatist.

In 1863, due to a fall in a Roman bath, he had lost his hearing (Nadler 338), a fact which made it even more difficult for him to communicate with the people around him, since it increased his suspicion and his irritability. Marie Ebner knew that Grillparzer was difficult to get along with. He was in many ways as gruff and stubborn as her own father. Yet she felt deeply attracted to him as a man and as an artist. She understood his sarcasm well: did she not herself have a good portion of it? She also sympathized with his desire to be left alone by the public since she likewise tried to escape from the thralldom of social life. In him she recognized a kindred spirit and ached to adopt him as her mentor in her early years as a budding dramatist.

In her essay "Meine Erinnerungen an Grillparzer" Marie Ebner, still embarrassed about her naiveté, recalls how she came to Grillparzer's apartment for the first time to read to him a drama of her own. Her heart beat violently but she plucked up courage and started to recite. He praised her, wanted to hear the whole work, suggested a few changes, but did not pass judgement on the piece.

With very mixed feelings I started on my way home. Very soon there was no more mixture. Repentance about the venture which I had undertaken did not come slowly, it came suddenly, overwhelmed me like a ferocious animal that jumps at a dreamily walking person. Grillparzer had certainly found my work absolutely miserable, and it certainly was miserable. How could I doubt it? I knew that I envied every beggar, whom I met, for his good conscience. It would not have occurred to him to read a self-made drama to the greatest living poet (887).

This first visit was followed by many more, each of them valued as great events in Marie Ebner's life and carefully recorded in her diary. On April 18, 1868 she wrote:

With Grillparzer. He received me very well. I am proud and happy. "May God reward you", he said, "that you pay a visit to the sick, to the dead". "The Immortal", I answered. That I meet with Grillparzer, that I hear him talk, that I can tell him how great and infinite my admiration for him is, that will remain a treasure for the rest of my life (TB I 233).

She knew how to take him because she was extremely fond of him. When he was in a bad mood she was able to cheer him up with her humour. Once, despondent because he felt neglected by his friends and was longing for company, he complained to Marie Ebner: "Nobody is coming to see me any longer; certainly no men, only women -- out of charity. I made these verses: 'This similarity I have with Christ -- the women are coming to my grave'. And she replied 'And old ogres at that, is it not true, Herr Hofrat?'" (EG 903).

During one of Marie Ebner's visits Grillparzer read to her from a book by his favourite Spanish author Lope de Vega. Although she did not understand a single word of Spanish she later considered this hour one of the "most sacred and most beautiful" (EG 991), because she could see how enchanted the old man was while enjoying and recreating a work of art that meant so much to him.

For every birthday Marie Ebner sent flowers to Grillparzer, but for his eightieth she wanted to do something special. Having heard that her beloved friend had expressed a wish to get new razors she asked her husband and her father to get the best kind to be found in Vienna. When she came to Grillparzer to wish him well and to give him her present he admired the razors, got up and gave her "a long, serious kiss"(EG 905). She recalls in her "Erinnerungen": "I felt as if I had received a consecration. I was totally happy and entirely solemn. I really cannot tell whether I walked down the stairs, or whether I ran down or floated down" (905/6). The next day, however, when Ebner-Eschenbach came to inquire about the razors, she learned that Grillparzer had not liked them and wanted them to be exchanged. She then felt like a thief because she had accepted a kiss for something her worshipped poet had no use for.

Although she could at times be quite critical of Grillparzer's personal flaws and of his art -- she did not like, for instance, his Jüdin von Toledo -- she generally admired and praised his work. After a performance of Ein treuer Diener seines Herrn, which Grillparzer had written for the occasion of Empress Karoline Augusta's coronation as Queen of Hungary (Nadler 327), Marie Ebner confided in her diary: "I cried -- for me there is no more moving piece; the fifth scene is pulling me irresistibly" (TB I 80).

She also adored his Bruderzwist im Hause Habsburg: "Excepting Shakespeare, nobody has written a historic tragedy which can compare with the Bruderzwist . How can one enter so deeply into the mysteries of a soul? Solve all its riddles? One has to be a god" (TZ 238).



Franz Grillparzer, oilpainting by Friedrich Amerling (1856)

She learned from Grillparzer to place human beings at the centre of her work and to focus on the psychology of her characters. With him she was able to conceive of art freely and through these conversations she gained self-assurance. Her love for him never waned, yet in later years she thought more highly of him as an artist than as a man. Her diary of September 27, 1889 reveals: "I read Grillparzer again and that is alright. A great poet, but perhaps not a sufficiently great man; sometimes where anger would be required there is only cantankerousness, but one always loves him" (Vesely 238).

Much of Marie Ebner's love and admiration for Franz Grillparzer has filtered into her 1910 story "Ob spät, ob früh" in which she describes the meeting of an Austrian Baroness with Hans Kolberg, a renowned composer and music director. Like Grillparzer Kolberg gives the appearance of being gruff, unapproachable and averse to compliments paid him by admirers of his art. Those who do not know him consider him a misanthrope (398). Like Grillparzer he regrets a past marked by debauchery (416)²⁶ and like him he depends emotionally on an actress, whose presence as well as absence make him extremely unhappy. As Grillparzer separated from Kathi Fröhlich and later returned to her, so Kolberg is drawn back to his artistic wife, whose "wild love" and "demonic power of heart" (416) hold him firmly in their grip. Both Grillparzer and Kolberg are deeply religious and strive for perfection in their art.²⁷

The Baroness directly springs from Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach's own roots. Extremely sensitive and eager to preserve her privacy, she well understands Kolberg's reserve and penchant for avoiding people. Being respectful and congenial she soon gains the artist's confidence and

even a kiss on the hand, for which she is envied by other visitors of the spa, where she and the artist take the waters (397). Long before meeting Kolberg personally, she, being likewise a musician and familiar with his art, has played and admired his famous compositions and has got to know him through his work. Two kindred souls have found each other but have to part again to go their separate ways.

Kolberg has to return to his wife and take care of his daughter (416), the Baroness must resume her life with an obliging but indifferent husband, for whom career and professional achievements count more than his family (370). The tears which the Baroness, usually calm and self-controlled, sheds after Kolberg's farewell visit reveal the depth of her feeling (418). He may have been her first true love.

During the same year in which Countess Dubsky-Kolowrat wrote to Franz Grillparzer to evaluate her stepdaughter's poems, Marie herself wrote to the well-known poet Betty Paoli to ask her whether she thought she had the talent to become a writer.²⁸ Through her beloved governess Marie Kittl, a staunch admirer of Paoli, she had become acquainted with the latter's poems, among which she particularly liked "Dunkle Einsamkeit", "Genügen", and "Hinweg" (EBP). Paoli's reply to Marie's quest was much more detailed and much more cautious than Grillparzer's:

You ask me whether I believe you have poetic talent. It seems impossible to me to provide a definite answer to this right now. There is no doubt that you have a poetic nature; your poems and every line in your letter give witness to this. There remains the question whether you have the ability to give artistic shape to everything that is moving within you, and to express it in a finished form. One can be rich in the most noble thoughts, the most beautiful sentiments, and still one need not be a poet, if these gifts are not joined by the power of articulation. Whether you possess this can only be found out through continued endeavours; first works do not permit such a judgement, because in these there is usually



Entry to Grillparzer's apartment

such a discrepancy between form and content that one's perspective is without any sure guidance. Only by examining them can we come to know our powers. My advice to you is: follow the urge that is in you; it is the voice through which God speaks to humans. Neither say "I want to write" nor "I want to give up writing poetry" but follow the command of the hour and do not miss any opportunity to broaden your mind and to enrich it. This endeavour is never lost, even if its results turn out to be different from what we thought, they are no less precious. If you really have a poet's vocation, it will gain more power and importance through assiduity and study; if not, you will reap some other reward, and, intellectually free, you will be the equal of those, who happen to have the gift of articulation. And allow me to give you another piece of advice: pay strict attention to form in your poetic work which you seem to have disdained up to now. That is not right, because even the divine must assume a beautiful earthly body, if it wishes to reveal itself, otherwise it will not find entry. Read, however, with great attention and in relation to yourself, our great poets, among the modern ones especially Platen, whose poetry you may not always find agreeable, but whose form is of such ideal beauty that you will benefit very greatly by it. Your ear must be schooled; this is to some extent a drudgery, but later it will bear rich fruit (B I 219/20).

In conclusion Betty Paoli expressed the wish to meet Marie personally. Countess Dubsky-Kolowrat therefore invited the poet in February 1848 and thus gave her daughter the opportunity to talk to the artist she had so long admired. Little did Marie know at that time that this inspired woman would one day become one of her staunchest supporters as a novelist and one of her best friends in old age.

CHAPTER 4:

"SINCERE LOVE, THAT WAS HER FEELING FOR HIM "

Grillparzer's and Betty Paoli's encouraging remarks did nothing to convince the Dubskys of Marie's talent for professional writing. For them it was most important that she develop her social skills. To write poetry was considered ridiculous in a family where everything had to be geared towards a practical goal. In 1880 Marie Ebner would write to Hieronymus Lorm:

Practical, practical, and never poetic! That is our motto. Everything that surrounds us preaches: "only practical". It was my cradle-song and even now I still have to take up the cudgels for the view that poetry also has a right to exist in life (BF 73).

Writing poetry was generally viewed with suspicion in aristocratic circles and seen as a waste of time. To listen to someone reciting his verses was boring in the highest degree to people who totally lacked literary understanding. In "Nach dem Tode" Marie would later describe a countess, who finds it an imposition to listen to her husband's poems, even though they are dedicated to her:

He insists on reading all that to me; and, you see, I cannot listen if someone is reading to me, I can't. My thoughts wander as soon as the reading begins and they do not return until it is ended. Then, of course, I say offhand: "charming, charming, very beautifully written" -- especially the last (41).²⁹

That Marie enjoyed reading and writing and showed an interest in serious studies was considered an anomaly in the family and she continued to suffer much because of that.³⁰ She became more and more painfully aware

of the discrepancy between what she dreamed of becoming and what she was expected to be. Forced to deny her true nature she withdrew ever more into herself in order to preserve her identity. Outwardly she fulfilled her duties in the family. She accompanied Xaverine on her social calls, was present when visitors were expected, took lessons in all the subjects fit for a young, nubile countess, but secretly she lived in a different world. Her life with her family was like hiding behind a screen of trivial words. Physically close, her parents were the farthest from Marie's soul.

Count and Countess Dubsky may have hoped that Marie's productive passion would be a passing wave and the impulse toward the poetic only a sign of puberty. Thus they quietly ignored her literary work and offended her deeply in the process. As a septuagenarian Marie still had not forgotten the hurt inflicted on her at that time by her relatives' rejection.

Generally respected authorities, recognized also by my own people, had acknowledged my little talent and the right to exercise it, but those who were dearest to me continued to observe concerned silence with regard to the illegitimate children of my mind (MK 809).

Marie's parents not only ignored her literary talent for fear she could turn into a bluestocking and forfeit her chances on the marriage market. They also, like most parents in nineteenth-century Austria, strongly insisted on their authority and demanded strict obedience and the fulfillment of duty. Children had to be grateful for what they received, they were not allowed to make demands and had to adhere to their parents' values. Young people were generally viewed with suspicion in Vormärz Austria, which tried to preserve its status quo at all costs.



Franz Grillparzer's living room

"Austria was an old state, dominated by an aged Emperor, ruled by old ministers; a state without ambition, which hoped to preserve itself unharmed in the European domain solely by opposing radical changes. Young people, who always instinctively desire rapid and radical changes, were therefore considered a doubtful element, that was to be held down or kept inactive for as long a time as possible" (Zweig 33). They were strictly brought up to respect the existing conditions without demur. Their opinion counted little, their suggestions for change were ignored. Marie therefore may often have been told that she was not mature enough to discuss problems or questions with her parents and that she simply had to accept what her elders decreed. This attitude and the fact that her writing was not taken seriously caused Marie to develop a lack of self-confidence from which she suffered all her life. In her correspondence with Hieronymus Lorm she once confessed: "The insecurity, the anxious hesitancy deriving from it, that is the great sadness of my productivity and the cause of my self-torment" (BF 72).

Especially her father with his unpredictable moods conveyed a repressive attitude and expectations his daughter felt at a loss to fulfill. Like Georg of "Der Vorzugsschüler" Marie may have craved to please her father and to gain his recognition. Unconsciously she may have cultivated her writing to prove to him that she indeed had talent and was worthy of his admiration.

The marginality Marie experienced in the family and the isolation she suffered were to pour out later in many novels and tales. In "Die Unverstandene auf dem Dorfe" the narrator says:

And what is one talking about if one feels so strange in front of people, like Marie? The inkling that a creature of her

worth would not do well in this evil world clarified into a conviction and constituted her pain but also her elevation (553).

In "Das Schädliche" we likewise meet a young girl, who considers herself a martyr in her family. She is "one of the many young things, whose soul is attuned to a different dominant than that of her environment, and it forms the embodied dissonance in the circle of relations" (586). While her parents were hoping to turn Marie into a young countess like Muschi ("Komtesse Muschi"), superficially educated, fun-loving and submissive to authority, she developed into a girl like Paula ("Komtesse Paula") who takes a view that is at variance with the norms of her aristocratic environment.

Since Marie hated dancing she did not care for the balls regularly given and attended by her family. Much more serious-minded than other girls her age and temperamentally retiring Marie had little desire to mix in the circles to which the family had been introduced through her father's fourth marriage.³¹ Xaverine's name gave her the right to move among the highest aristocracy and there was hardly a noble family to whom she was not related. Yet like Paula in "Komtesse Paula" Marie may have eyed social life with some reserve:

I came to know many people and what I noticed most was that with all the quantity the quality stayed the same. When one is seventeen one begins to think and thus I thought: If one could let the souls of these ladies and gentlemen -- especially of the gentlemen!--divest themselves of their bodies and have them run about, it would not be possible to distinguish one from the other (330).

Observing the young countesses in the ballroom Marie also may have had thoughts like Sarah of Das Waldfräulein who prides herself on speaking her mind and openly voices her disdain in front of a large

gathering: "The poor girls! When I see them fly around, dead tired and exhausted, but with a smiling face I have to think of the children of a tight-rope walker who once visited our village" (534). And ignoring her embarrassed older sister's effort to interrupt her, she continues:

They jumped around for an incredibly long time and put on a happy face and, as I learned later, they were brought to this through cruel punishment. How much must the countesses have been punished till they learned to dance without breathing heavily and to smile through their pain (534/5).

As Marie matured her observation grew sharper and she began to understand the difference between herself and her peers much more clearly. She also began to object to the hypocrisy and ostentation of her class, to the lack of education and to the lack of any serious interests. She ridiculed the pronounced status awareness that people around her exhibited and became impatient with the prejudices she encountered in her circles.

All these objections are recorded in those works, where female protagonists, like Sarah of Das Waldfräulein, Paula of "Komtesse Paula", Maria Dornach of Unsühnbar, observe the society around them with growing misgivings and open indignation. In a society, where symbols, appearances and perceptions counted more than reality, where persons were judged by their attire and where people who did not conform to the standards of elegance were ostracized, Marie Dubsky with her love of nature and her contempt for artificiality had of necessity to become an outsider. No wonder that she took to the pen as her only weapon to criticize what she considered flaws of her class. In her first published work Aus Franzensbad she would later vent all her frustrations about the shallowness and arrogance of her peers and in the following works,

although in a somewhat mitigated form, she would still criticize all the shortcomings of society as she had encountered them in her adolescence. Her diary entries from the 1860s onwards abound with critical and censorious references to peers, whose lack of interest in reading Marie Ebner found particularly annoying.

On June 15, 1868 she entered: "The couple XC. She looks younger than she is, he looks more stupid than he should be. 'I only read when I am bored', he says. 'I am only bored when I am reading', she says" (TB I 235). In later years when Marie Ebner had mellowed and had long realized that she would never be able to change the prejudices and habits of her class, she observed her milieu with less sarcasm and more humour. To her friend Fritz Mauthner, who noticed "how delightfully the writer could giggle at these pranks" she told the following anecdote which likewise points to the aristocracy's aversion to reading:

They held a hunting party here in Moravia and I was also part of it. A young gentleman from the German Embassy, very educated, sat beside me, between myself and Baroness X, a very nice lady. He began to talk about my poor books and did not cease and he used such frightfully big words that I would have liked to crawl into a mousehole. The Baroness had to listen to everything and constantly gave me some friendly nods, as if it was also her own opinion. But then she said: "I have also heard of your new book, my dear Ebner. I would have bought it, but what to do with it afterwards?" (Berliner Tageblatt, April 2, 1916).

As a teenager Marie was much less tolerant towards her peers with whose rigid, conservative values she could not identify. Having a highly developed social consciousness she deeply resented the ostentation exhibited by people of her class and the condescension with which they treated their subordinates.

In her childhood she had rebelled against the Burggraf, who had brutally beaten a helpless serf (KL 274). As she grew up she became more and more perceptive of the injustice people of lower social strata had to endure from those in power. She noticed poverty and suffering with increased intensity and ached to help. Instead of seeing others suffer she herself wanted to endure pain in order to relieve that of those she pitied.

As she recalls in her autobiography, she wanted to suffer, "not because others would benefit by it, but because my suffering was alleviating theirs for me" (792).

A girl whose proclivities and way of thinking deviated so much from those of her peers was destined to become an outsider in her milieu. Yet she had one ally in the family, her cousin Moritz. He was considered an oddball like herself, because his intellectual interests also digressed from the aristocratic norm. Moritz von Ebner-Eschenbach was the son of Marie's aunt Helene and her husband, Wenzel von Ebner-Eschenbach. Genealogists are not sure whether, as Moritz would later claim, the Austrian Ebner-Eschenbachs were related to those of Nuremberg, who had settled there in the tenth century (Mitterhofer, 4). According to Moritz' memoirs the family had split during the Reformation into a Protestant and a Catholic branch. The Protestant branch remained in Nuremberg, retaining the ancient Eschenbach castle, whereas the Catholic branch moved first to Silesia, and, after the province's conquest by Prussia, to Moravia which was part of the Austrian Empire. Moritz, who after his retirement indulged in genealogy and decorated his apartment in the Amtshaus in Zdislawitz with ancestral portraits, traced his descent in Austria back to a Wolfgang Ebner in the seventeenth century. Being an organist under Emperor Ferdinand III

Ebner had excellent connections to the court and was ennobled in 1641. Henceforth he and his two brothers, Mathias and Markus, had a coat of arms which, however, differed from that of the Nuremberg Ebner-Eschenbachs (Mitterhofer 5). Wolfgang Ebner's widow, Susanna Renata, and her sons were accepted into the knighthood in 1694 and allowed to call themselves "Ritter von Ebner". Their new coat of arms was the same as that of the Ebner-Eschenbachs of Nuremberg (Mitterhofer 5).

Moritz' grandfather, Ferdinand Ritter von Ebner, bought an estate in Auspitz, Moravia, but due to war lost his fortune, so that the family was left with only a meagre income. They had three sons, Johann, who inherited the estate, Ignaz and Wenzel, soon after whose birth in 1743 the father died. The widow, hardly able to make ends meet, sent the two younger boys to Vienna. Ignaz entered the army and was killed at Hochkirch in 1758 during the Seven Years War. Wenzel, Moritz' father, became an apprentice to a glove maker. Distant relations, to whom his mother had recommended him, secured a stipend in the Military School of Engineering in Vienna. In 1762 Wenzel Ritter von Ebner entered the Military Engineer corps, became lieutenant in 1771 and soon afterwards was promoted to Captain. In 1744 he married Josepha von Cunz of Esseg and in 1778 he moved to Olmütz.

The couple had two sons. Karl, born in 1779, was mentally and physically retarded and had to be institutionalized. He died, aged thirty, at the Spital der Barmherzigen Brüder. His younger brother Nikolaus, born in 1782, entered the Military Engineering Academy, was accepted into the Engineer Corps, where his father had served before him, and was killed in 1809 in the battle of Aspern.³²

Wenzel Ritter von Ebner, a widower since 1787, dedicated his whole life to the military. He served in Syrmia and Slavonia, he fought at the Rhine and distinguished himself in 1795 during the occupation of Mannheim, whereupon he received the "Ritterkreuz des Militärischen Maria Theresia Ordens."³³ In 1796 he was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel and elevated to the baronetcy. Emperor Franz II bestowed upon him the predicate "von Eschenbach" and gave him a new coat of arms which differed only slightly from that of the Nuremberg Ebner-Eschenbachs (Mitterhofer 5). After a short service in Mantua Wenzel von Ebner-Eschenbach was transferred to Vienna, where he headed the Engineering Academy as interim director until a new director was found. In 1804 he was promoted to the rank of Major General. One year after his son Nikolaus' death at the battlefield, Baron Wenzel von Ebner-Eschenbach, aged sixty-six, married the latter's fiancée, the twenty-nine year old Helene Dubsky.

After Wenzel's promotion to Fieldmarshall Lieutenant the couple lived very comfortably in their apartment on the Franziskanerplatz in Vienna. In 1815 their son Moritz was born. When Moritz was five his father died, leaving the family with a small pension. Fortunately for Helene her brother Franz acquired the Rabenhaus through his marriage and invited her and her son to move in with him and his wife Konradine von Sorgenthal.

Later, when Konradine had died and Franz Dubsky remarried in 1827, castle Zdislawitz, Baroness Marie Vockel's inheritance, became Helene's and Moritz' place for the summer. After his elementary school training at the private school Pension Kudlig, Moritz, aged twelve, received a scholarship for the exclusive Theresianum, which prepared the sons of the élite for the

civil service. Although an excellent student, Moritz decided in 1834 to exchange the rather monastic Theresianum for the Engineering Academy in order to become an officer in the Austrian Army. In spite of the hard beds, the mediocre food and the shabby sports facilities, Moritz enjoyed life at the academy with its egalitarian spirit and did very well in all the subjects. His role model became Archduke Johann, the president of the institute, and a man of great military distinction (EME I,4).

In 1837 Moritz became an Engineer Lieutenant and in 1840 he was appointed professor of physics and chemistry at the Engineering Academy, the same institute where he had studied for the past six years. In order to improve his knowledge in his subjects he registered as an auditor at the University of Vienna and at the Polytechnic. He attended lectures given by Andreas Ettinghausen, an eminent scholar from whose classes he greatly benefitted. In 1842 Moritz started to teach at the Academy and soon became a well qualified, widely known instructor, making his name through a number of technical inventions and improvements. He later claimed to have been the first to use gun cotton in Austria (EME II,4). He also invented an electric ignition system, which in due time was used by the Austrian army in war. For two years Moritz also gave lectures outside the Engineering Academy. Students from far and wide came to study his experiments and even Count Theodor Latour occasionally honoured him with his presence.

Moritz was a distinguished professor when his little cousin Marie began to take a romantic interest in him. Through Aunt Helene, whose heart always swelled with pride when she spoke of her son, she had learned about Moritz' childhood, his adventures and achievements at school,

and she knew of his promising career at the Engineering Academy. Out of respect for his accomplishments she called him "Uncle Moritz" (MK 815).

For Moritz, Marie, his junior by fifteen years, was like a little sister. He had seen her shortly after her birth when he spent the summer holidays in Zdislawitz, he had often carried her around as a baby and had watched her growing up with increasing delight. He enjoyed her boldness, her courage to stand up for her beliefs, he also noticed with pleasure that she was highly intelligent and anxious to learn. As Moritz later recalled in his memoirs: "She grew up into a serious, thoughtful girl, with no education other than the usual social training, but filled with an ardent desire to do great things" (B II 27). Being a professor, Moritz wanted to educate his cousin and instill in her his own love of academic studies. Eager to help her fill the gaps in her superficial education, he lent her books on history and science and invited her to watch the heavenly bodies through his telescope.

Once, after a Sunday dinner, which Moritz regularly shared with Marie and her family in the Rabenhaus, he discovered one of Marie's copybooks which contained some of her poems, all in French. He read her "Ode á Napoleon" and put it aside. As she records in Meine Kinderjahre he remained "indifferent as if it was a role of thread or some other trivial thing. I did not dare to look at him, even less to ask him 'Did you not like it at all?'" (818). A few days later Moritz sent her a box of delicious sweets, accompanied by a poem from Zedlitz' Waldfräulein. He had added a verse of his own, admonishing his young cousin, since she was German, to use the German language for her poetry (MK 819).

For Moritz, as for many members of the educated classes in Austria, German culture was superior to the other cultures in the multinational empire. He loved his "magnificent mother tongue" (EME I,3) and always regretted that it had been neglected at the Theresianum, where classical studies and grammar had been overemphasized. In the military, however, German was the language of command and wherever he was stationed he could communicate with his fellow soldiers in his mother tongue (Johnston 51).

Marie was in raptures about "Uncle Moritz'" verse. He had not blamed or rejected her as Fritz and Grandma Vockel had done, but had actually encouraged her to write.

Those verses were meant for me! To me they were directed and I felt highly honoured and elevated. And how their content was clear to me and illumined my heart! I could say what I thought if I but said it in German. A very strict man was sanctioning my writing under this condition (MK 819).

From then on Marie tried to think only in German, and she soon produced a number of German poems, all centering on themes and motifs connected with the "Hymn on the Rhine". She especially enjoyed the verse "Es singen die Sänger zur Harfe laut", which Moritz had copied for her from Zedlitz' epos.

Gradually Marie's mind became preoccupied with one particular "singer", Moritz, to whom she owed her transformation from a French bard into a German poet. Moritz was the only member in the family who understood her love of literature, her interest in academic studies, and he seemed to take her writing seriously. Marie felt that he was a kindred spirit, a person she could trust. Moritz became the man of her dreams. Dark-haired, tall and slim he looked extremely attractive in his colourful

Engineer Lieutenant uniform. As a member of the military Moritz was also called to perform ceremonial functions and had the right to appear at court, a fact which made him all the more admirable in the eyes of his young cousin.

She adored Moritz for his aplomb, his learning and military know-how. She was proud of him when in 1844 Count Theodor Latour, the Fieldmarshall Lieutenant, invited him to accompany him on a tour of inspection to Dalmatia.³⁴ She foresaw a promising future for Moritz, yet she also realized that he was, like herself, an outsider in her milieu. He tried to unite two contradicting elements, soldier and scholar, and often met with suspicion in aristocratic circles. While the military service was held in the highest regard by the elite, intellectual pursuits were frowned upon.

Count Franz Dubsky, his uncle, for one was not at all pleased that Moritz had adopted the title of professor and embarked on a scholarly career (EME II,4). He often challenged his nephew because of the latter's zest for academic studies. Moritz considered learning "the greatest virtue" and teaching "the greatest honour" (B I 30). Both of these ideals were anathema to his uncle who, being a dedicated soldier, had nothing but contempt for people who wasted their time with something as impractical as studying.³⁵ Years earlier Count Dubsky had met the famous philosopher Hegel at a German spa and had formed a very low opinion of him which henceforth he extended to all academics. He objected so much to Moritz' teaching career that the latter had to defend himself, and the meetings between uncle and nephew often threatened to end in quarrels (MK 816).

Moritz, in addition to being a detested intellectual, also was a great admirer of Admiral Wilhelm von Tegetthoff, the founder of the Austrian navy and a very distinguished and progressive commander (Kann 273). Moritz shared Tegetthoff's military and political views and further angered his uncle because of his liberal leanings. Marie took Moritz' side when controversies between him and her father arose. Much of how she saw Moritz at that time may have been recorded in Das Waldfräulein. Count Robert Hochburg, clearly drawn from Moritz, imperturbably bears his peers' suspicion and contempt and gains the love of his young niece on account of his honorable attitude. He is a liberal and sees through the hypocrisy of his class as much as does Baron Benno Schwarzburg of "Komtesse Paula" -- another sketch of Moritz -- who likewise is ostracized by his peers. They call him a "fool" (338) and ridicule his idealism (361), yet they cannot but feel respect for his expertise and his honourableness (338).

Both these characters resemble Moritz further in their disdain for luxury and pomp. He much preferred the frugal ways of the Engineering Academy to the luxurious style of the Theresianum and later, on his first trip to England, felt embarrassed by being honoured in public (EME II,7). Like Marie he enjoyed nature and country life and abhorred glittering social gatherings.

Marie's parents may have had another suitor in mind for her, since after all, Moritz was her cousin, and a marriage between first cousins, although legally permissible, still met with suspicion and social censure in many quarters (Flügel 92). Like most aristocratic parents they sent their nubile daughters to the customary soirées and arranged for their debut when the girls were eighteen years old. Carneval was usually the time

for the big "coming out" event, when the girls, beautifully adorned, went to their first balls. Their parents then began to nurture the hope that soon after an eligible suitor would formally ask for their daughters' hand.

Yet Marie was not the normal young countess, who eagerly expected to be introduced to the glitter and amusement of the world. She had no talent and inclination for dancing and therefore tried to avoid the dance floor. She also was painfully aware that she was not very attractive on account of her somewhat protruding eyes and her dented nose.³⁶ It hurt her deeply to be less beautiful than her older sister, who danced with elegance and ease and who never had to sit out a cotillion. How much Marie must have suffered on account of her unattractiveness may be inferred from a passage in "Lotti, die Uhrmacherin". There the narrator mentions that the protagonist avoids looking into the mirror because she fears her own sight: "The time when she had felt her lack of beauty quite painfully and almost like a shame had passed. Now, at age thirty-five, as an honourable spinster, she had long ceased to hate and berail her appearance" (852). Further on in the story Lotti remembers the glance young men, who met her for the first time, used to give her: "the glance that distinctly asks 'what do you want in the world?' and to which an unattractive girl has to get accustomed" (872).

In 1866, aged thirty six, Marie Ebner, by now long aware that beauty alone did not make a woman attractive, commented about a relative: "Beauty, without a valuable background is not as universally victorious a gift as one believes in one's youth" (TB 116). And further she mused: "Beauty without nobility of the soul is a sad thing; it is lacking that which makes beauty powerful -- if it does not shine forth from beautiful eyes,

if it does not speak out of a beautiful face 'I think! I feel! what is all the splendour for ?" (TB I 204). Years later she was even able to joke about her lack of beauty. In reply to Fritz Mauthner's present, a photograph of the poet Annette von Droste-Hülshoff, Marie Ebner sent him a picture of herself in younger years and commented teasingly: "True, I no longer look like that! Well, if a countess is being painted, she always turns out beautiful. Even I was a beauty for the painter (Berliner Tagblatt, April 2, 1916).

In old age, in her autobiographical story "Der Bildhauer" she referred again to her "old, ugly face" (AW 692). By then she had the comfort of being a highly acclaimed writer and her physique did not bother her that much any longer.

To compensate for her physical unattractiveness Marie read voraciously and tried to impress the men around her with brilliant talk. With her sharp eye and highly developed observational skills she may have been quite amusing to listen to. Where wit and sarcasm were appreciated Marie must have been in great demand. Yet most young men were more attracted to girls who excelled on the dance floor rather than to "bluestockings" flaunting their wisdom. Like Sarah of Das Waldfräulein Marie may have been told to hide her knowledge because a "highly educated girl does not find a husband" (511). Interestingly enough it is the so-called bluestockings in Marie Ebner's work, who find the husband they love. Sarah (Das Waldfräulein) is happily united with Count Paul, Clara Aarheim ("Comtesse Muschi") inelegant and boring on account of her "gaping mouth and everlasting blushes" (Harriman 40) becomes the bride

of her adored Count Carl, and Paula ("Komtesse Paula") likewise marries the man of her dreams.

Marie saw Moritz daily. Since his transfer from Olmütz, where he had been involved in building forts and bombproof barracks, he had moved back into his mother's apartment on the third floor of the Rabenhaus (EME II,4). He was extremely dedicated to his work and to live with his mother again in the rooms where he had spent his childhood years, was his greatest happiness. It also delighted him to be adored by his cousin and to find in her a docile student, who admired his superior knowledge. He shared with her his love of nature, his love of the theatre and his political views. Gradually Marie, his "little sister", became his confidante.

Not long after his return from Dalmatia Moritz proposed to Marie, who gladly accepted his hand in marriage. Financially he was not well off, but his prospects in the military looked promising. Like Paula ("Komtesse Paula"), whose parents unexpectedly agree to her marriage with Baron Schwarzburg "the little office clerk" (Harriman 63) Marie had convinced her parents that Moritz was the man of her choice, and like Paula Marie hoped at his side to "grow wise, clever and better day by day" (Harriman 66). Her feelings for Moritz, whom she had known from childhood on may have been similar to those of Louise ("Die arme Kleine") of whom the narrator says:

Sincere love, that was her feeling for him, she did not know of powerful passion, she even thought herself incapable of it. But she thought it would be beautiful to go through life loyally united with the dearest person, in joy and in suffering (760).³⁷

Free from the fetters of her parental home where intellectual occupations had always been frowned upon, Marie hoped finally to be able to devote

herself to her studies. With Moritz' help she thought to develop her literary career, because writing was still her greatest passion.³⁸ In July 1848 Marie and Moritz were married at Zdislawitz. While the world around them rose in protest against oppression, exploitation and poverty and demanded the aboliton of absolutism in Austria, the newlyweds established their home at the Sternhof on the Jordansplatz in Vienna where they hoped to live in peace and harmony.

For Marie at eighteen it was not easy to adjust to being the wife of a thirty-three-year-old military man, who by then was set in his ways and totally dedicated to his profession. He was used to giving orders and to seeing them followed obediently. He was also accustomed, as a professor, to be considered an authority whom students never dared to contradict. He was further used to living with his beloved mother, Marie's aunt Helene, who would henceforth share all the couple's residences until her death in 1864.

Helene Dubsky, by then sixty-seven, was a heavy burden for Marie. Constitutionally frail and by nature prone to take things extremely seriously she had never gotten over her sad, deprived childhood and the sufferings endured in later life. She had lost two brothers -- to one of them she had been particularly deeply attached -- in the Napoleonic wars, where also her fiancé, Nikolaus von Ebner-Eschenbach had been killed in action. Her marriage to the latter's father had lasted only ten years and after his death had left her again in financial straits that caused her endless worries about her own and her son's future. She gradually fell into deep depression which led to a nervous disorder, causing severe mental and emotional disturbance (EME III,2).

Marie had never been very close to her. She remembered all her life that it had been Helene who had asked her as a seven-year-old girl to come to Maman Eugenie's bedside, when she was dying and to endure the latter's unjust accusations. Helene, fifty-six at the time, must have been quite insensitive and totally oblivious to the feelings of a child. Her mind centered mainly on herself and her soldier son, with whom she had the most intimate and most beautiful relationship (MK 816).

The fact that Helene lived with the couple from the start of their marriage and continued to do so for sixteen years meant that Marie constantly had to bear with a depressive person and had to nurse her during frequent illnesses. She also had to share Moritz's love with his mother.³⁹ Since his father had died when Moritz was only five years old, the latter never had a rival for his mother's affection. In his memoirs he lovingly recalls:

How undemanding one was then! And how much happiness came from this frugality. How complete was my happiness in spite of the restricted circumstances in which I grew up. In the first place I have to thank my excellent mother. She was everything for me. I never had a nursemaid, nor a bonne, nor a tutor, only a mother. She never scolded or punished me when I was indolent, she did not praise or reward me when I was diligent. But she turned very sad in the first case and very happy in the other. Her tears fell like molten lead on my heart, her laughter was bliss for me (I,2-3).

Helene never remarried and thus all her life gave her undivided attention to her only son, who gratefully returned her attachment. She had watched over his education at the "Pension Kudlig", and had later acquired a scholarship for him at the prestigious Theresianum. She had taken him to an audience with Emperor Franz, who had encouraged him to follow in his father's footsteps. With a heavy heart she had accepted the fact that Moritz finally did choose his father's career and entered the Engineering

Academy. When he was transferred from Olmütz to Vienna after a three-year separation she happily welcomed him back to her apartment, and it was only natural for her that she should later stay with him when he was married.

When she died Moritz was heartbroken and could not bear the thought of losing the woman who had been the centre of his life (TB I 37).⁴⁰ He kept her photograph at his bedside and as an old man, after an eye operation, he turned his first glance to her (B II 227). In contrast to her husband, Marie Ebner was relieved when her aunt and mother-in-law died and wished her "the long-missed peace" (TB I 37). Nowhere in her diary does she mention that she loved Helene. She only calls her "poor mother" in contrast to her "beloved Grandma Bartenstein" with whom she obviously had a warm and loving relationship. After Helene's death Marie was sorry only for the latter's "poor, abandoned room" (TB I 41). What she really felt for her mother-in-law, who idolized her son, may be reflected in "Das Schädliche" where Edith, the protagonist, admits: "I hate your mother... I hate her because you love her more than me. I always feared that, now I know it" (593).

Marie Ebner's work abounds with stories in which an intimate, tender and loving relationship between mother and son is described. In some of them, as in "Ob spät, ob früh" and in "Der Erstgeborene" the relationship even resembles that of two lovers. In her youth Marie had had the occasion to observe the deep affection between her piano teacher, Mrs. Krähmer and her violinist son. During a concert that Marie had been invited to attend with Grandma Vockel she witnessed how Mrs. Krähmer's son idolized his mother:

He did not turn his luminous dark eyes away from his mother. Questioning, guessing, they rested on her and out of them spoke deification. Yes, I have seen that! -- or rather I only intimated it. The greatest tenderness, which a human heart can feel, which emerges partly from enthusiasm, partly from compassion, shone forth from this glance of a son (MK 790).

Living with Moritz and Helene, Marie had further occasion closely to watch the unique bond between mother and son. Helene had a strong hold on Moritz' life, and even as a husband he continued to be primarily a son. Therefore there must have been moments of jealousy and times when Marie found it difficult to bear that she was less important to her husband than his mother. Outwardly calm, self-composed and reserved, Moritz may often have given the impression of being indifferent to his young, demonstrative wife.⁴¹ His work and career preoccupied him greatly, so much so that he did not mind leaving Marie, less than a year after their wedding, to spend three months in England as a military reporter (EME II,6). What Marie felt towards her serious-minded, career-conscious husband may have filtered into "Erste Trennung", where a young, recently married woman -- considerably younger than her prominent awe-inspiring husband -- tests his love for her, because she thinks she is not important to him. In the end she confesses:

I want to tell you everything, listen. I have always known: he loves me. Why should he not? He feels that I adore him, he sees that he is being envied because of me, I am bringing honour to him. That is so and has to be like that and he deserves it, he, who is everything to me, and to whom I am -- something (554).

The story "Ob früh, ob spät" may likewise reflect some of Marie's insights as a newlywed:

And then after her marriage she realized -- and this did not come as a disappointment -- that she would only play a side-role in his life. His interests were outside the family interests. His heart remained back in the office, his mind, his

genius by which he was touched. Home came a taciturn man, who was surprised if his wife wanted to render account to him of some arrangement she had made. He approved of everything, his quiet, circumspect Kathy had decided; he was generous to the extreme out of pure indifference (379/80).

The marriage remained childless and probably intentionally so.⁴² Marie and Moritz were very close blood-relations as first cousins and knew that the stock from which they descended was not a healthy one. On the Ebner-Eschenbach side there was Moritz' half-brother Karl, who had spent all his life in an asylum because of his physical and mental handicaps (Mitterhofer 6), and on the Dubsky side there was Helene, whose nervous disorder may also have been congenital. Although Marie's biographer, Anton Bettelheim, claims that she sorely missed children (B I 41), there is no evidence of that in any available letter or diary entry. At thirty-six, at an age where she still could have borne children, Marie Ebner wrote in her diary: "I expected the New Year awake, and I greeted it with modest wishes -- it need not bring me anything new, it only should not take anything of what I have, away from me (TB I 135).

Later, after the death of the infant son of Moritz' last Ebner relative she casually commented: "Today at half past eight the little Ebner died [...] They say that the family is destined to die out" (TB I 169). Elisabeth of "Komtesse Paula" considers it a great blessing not to have children, because she does not love her cool and condescending husband, and Habrecht of Das Gemeindegeld emphatically states: "That is the greatest delusion that one ought to have one's own children -- there are enough children in this world!" (120)

When her nieces and nephews grew up Marie Ebner became a doting aunt and proudly stated in a poem "the childless one has the most

children" (qtd. in Reuter 80). Later, as an acclaimed writer, she considered her books her children and said in an aphorism: "There is a relationship which is closer than that between mother and child: that between an artist and his work" (B I 41).

Due to Moritz' long absence and Helene's depressive state Marie again withdrew into her own world of studying and writing. If her husband thought she could live vicariously through him, who had his important military tasks and his promising career, he was mistaken.⁴³ Marie was ambitious and craved to find her own identity as a professional writer. She had vowed not to leave this earth "without having imprinted at least a soft track of my steps" (ZT 721). The happiness in their marriage would depend on Moritz' understanding and acceptance of his wife's urge to realize herself.

NOTES

1. As Katherine Dalsimer states in Female Adolescence: "While the task of the adolescent is to relinquish the idealization of the parent in order to become free for other attachments, the need of the child or adolescent, whose parent has died, is the opposite: it is to idealize the dead. Enshrined in memory, the lost parent is preserved" (124).
2. See also Viktor Klemperer, a contemporary of Ebner-Eschenbach, who calls her "a most radical personality" (713).
3. This quote may be found in the sketch to Ebner's autobiography. It was later omitted in the published version of Meine Kinderjahre (Schmidt 304).
4. See also Jiri Veselý (ESD 91).
5. Piaget observes in A Child's Conception of the World: "Just as the child makes his own truth so he makes his own reality" (167).
6. The nineteenth-century German writer Hedwig Dohm adds a significant dimension to the phenomenon of daydreaming when she says: "The reason why my memory had retained so little factual information from my childhood years is probably, that I always tried to hide from reality, that my real being was smothered by the rude insensitivity of my surroundings, and it only survived in me in a latent form (Kössler 88). Likewise George Eliot once remarked: "When I was quite a little girl I could not be satisfied with the things around me; I was constantly living in a world of my own creation and was quite contented to have no companions, so that I might be left to my own musings and imagine scenes in which I was chief actress" (Redinger 52).
7. In the sketch to her autobiography Ebner-Eschenbach states about her characters: "They became real beings for me. I knew how they looked, how they laughed. I invented their daily routine and shared their sadness when they encountered an accident" (Schmidt 128).
8. Compare to Erika of "Die arme Kleine" (652).
9. Marie Ebner's work abounds with sad and unhappy children. See especially "Ein Edelmann", "Komtesse Paula", "Die arme Kleine" where it is explicitly stated that a character has experienced an unhappy childhood. In "Wieder die Alte" the narrator ridicules the countess who speaks of "the sweetness of family life, solidarity that floats like an oasis of oil on the ocean of life" (140).
10. Count Dubsky was made a Privy Councillor in 1869 (TB I 251).
11. Marie Ebner was deeply troubled by her parents' unhappy marriage, which she transformed into fiction in order to come to terms with it. While in the 80s and 90s the husband is portrayed as the guilty one, in the 1915

- story "Der Herr Hofrat" the author comes to the conclusion that neither husband nor wife are to blame (459).
12. This glove can be seen in the archives of the City Hall (Rathaus) Vienna under the number I.N. 56701.
 13. Compare to "Wieder die Alte" where the governess is described as Marie von Meiberg's "confidante of her most holy secrets" (141).
 14. Marie Kittl's charge at the Belgian Court was Princess Charlotte, the future wife of Emperor Maximilian of Mexico, Emperor Franz Joseph's hapless brother, who was executed in 1867 (Grun 430).
 15. Marie Ebner's longing for her biological mother increased over the years. Compare to Mrs. Gaskell, who had a similar fate and who wrote, when close to forty: "I think no one but one so unfortunate as to be early motherless can enter into the craving one has after the lost mother" (Lost Tradition 104).
 16. How deprived Marie was by not being able to go to school may be seen from a comparison with Stephan Zweig, who attended a Gymnasium in Vienna. He writes in his autobiography: "But how thankfully I think of that comradeship ! How much it helped me ! How those fiery discussions, that wild rivalry, that mutual admiration and criticism gave practice to my hand and nerve, how it widened and heightened my view of the intellectual cosmos" (The World 56).
 17. This incident has been recorded with modifications in "Nach dem Tode", where Thekla's drawing teacher makes advances to her.
 18. Marie Ebner never considered Zdislawitz a "castle". In her letter of 5 August 1880 to Hieronymus Lorm she calls it a "friendly country house" (BF 72).
 19. The importance of the Hofburgtheater and its actors has been described by Stefan Zweig in The World of Yesterday. He mentions that at the time the old Burgtheater was demolished, people gathered to collect at least a splinter of the venerated building (16).
 20. The Vice-Chancellor of Maria Theresia was Count Leopold Kolowrat-Krakowsky, who was instrumental in helping to abolish the death penalty (Kann 179). In Metternich's cabinet the Minister of the Interior was a Count Kolowrat -Krakowsky who later became the chancellor's fierce opponent (Hantsch 289).
 21. In contrast to this, Ebner-Eschenbach describes wrath with metaphors denoting heat, e.g. "Beichte" (483), "Glaubenslos" (325).
 22. Bertha von Suttner mentions in her memoirs that her cousin Elvira, an aspiring dramatist, sent her manuscript to Grillparzer, who then came to her home and encouraged her to continue writing (44).

23. It is interesting that in the sketch to her autobiography Marie Ebner belittles the importance of Grillparzer's letter. She writes, perhaps out of modesty: "What it proves ? That Grillparzer is a polite and noble man" (Schmidt 135).
24. Anton Bettelheim, Ebner's biographer, alludes to the fact that Countess Dubsky-Kolowrat may have sent Marie's poems to Grillparzer in order to deter her once and for all from writing (B I 28).
25. Marie Ebner wrote this poem in the 1880s after a performance of Die Ahnfrau and assured the poet that this drama had already deeply affected her as a child (RV 79177Ja/ I.N. 54488).
26. Grillparzer was once involved with four women at the same time and was living in adultery with his cousin's wife. Nadler claims that the poet described his amorous adventures in his novella Das Kloster von Sendomir (Nadler 319).
27. It is interesting that Ebner-Eschenbach entitles Kolberg's masterpiece Drei Sonaten. Nadler points out that Grillparzer's work is built around a trilogy. Three times he grouped together three dramatic works, a tragedy, a piece based on a fairy tale, and a psychological drama (Nadler 320).
28. C.M. Schmidt states how unfortunate it is that we do not know who wrote to Betty Paoli (226). Yet Anton Bettelheim mentions in his first biography that Marie Dubsky turned to the famous poet to ask her advice. He also includes the letter in which Paoli writes: "You ask me whether I believe you have talent" (B I 219). This clearly refers to the young Marie Dubsky.
29. Cf. Ebner-Eschenbach's letter of 30 November 1870 to Hieronymus Lorm, where she quotes her acquaintances judging her novel Bozena: "Charming, you know, your Zenoba or Bozena, quite charming, only the characterization I would have liked somewhat sharper, yet all in all charming" (BF 69).
30. In her essay "Komtessen und Stiftsdamen" in Der Monat of Feb. 9, 1857 Nora Wydenbruck points out that when she was a young countess everybody was frowned upon, who showed an interest in culture, serious literature or philosophy, and who admired modern music or art (39).
31. Marie Ebner's aversion to glittering social gatherings is reflected in many of her works, e.g. Unsühnbar: "They joke, they play, they flirt and carelessly steer towards the same end that awaits the tormented" (469/70). Also in "Das Schädliche", where the narrator criticizes the cliques that have come into existence in Viennese high society (595).
32. In his memoirs Moritz von Ebner-Eschenbach claims that there were five children in his father's first marriage (EME I,1). Yet Bettina Mitterhöfer mentions only two sons in her unpublished dissertation (6).

33. The Maria Theresia Order was a decoration the Empress had established in 1757 as a reward for courage. A soldier received it if he had accomplished a valiant deed "without contravening a direct order" (Johnston 52).
34. Theodor Count Baillet de Latour later became minister of defence and was brutally murdered during the 1848 Revolution in Vienna. Moritz von Ebner-Eschenbach called this event one of the saddest experiences of his life (EME II,5).
35. Count Franz Dubsky not only had contempt for scholars and for higher learning but also was deeply suspicious of educated people since they were considered by many aristocrats potential revolutionaries, who could deprive the aristocracy of their social and political privileges (Winter 188/9).
36. Eduard Devrient, director of the Karlsruhe theatre, confided in his diary, after meeting Marie Ebner in his home in 1863, that he found her "frighteningly ugly" on account of her dented nose (Kabel 423).
37. Critics have remarked on Ebner's inability to describe passion (see A. Bettelheim and G. Gerber in Bittrich 291-2). See also Gabriele Reuter, Ebner-Eschenbach who claims that the author's sole passion was her writing (17). According to J.C. Flügel's theory Marie may not have been able to fully develop her "love instincts in her youth, since she did not transfer them to someone outside the family" (30).
38. In a letter to Marie Kittl she once declared: "I cannot give up writing even if I lost [Moritz'] love" (B I 25).
39. Marie Ebner always saw her husband and his mother as an integrated whole, so much so that several years after Moritz' death she had his and Helene's casket brought up from the lower crypt to the chapel, where she liked to meditate (B II 292).
40. Carol Klein has observed in her study that "military sons seemed to have enormous difficulty in separating from their mothers or in even wanting to" (228).
41. Moritz may have had a mother fixation. According to J. C. Flügel, "a parent fixation of this kind may make itself felt negatively in an inability to direct love freely and fully upon any other person of the same sex as the loved parent" (57). Flügel also points out that some men with such an abnormal affection may choose to marry only because of "the need to escape from an unconscious incestuous desire" (51-2). Flügel further states that some men with a mother fixation have homosexual inclinations (53).
42. According to Karl Abraham it was believed at the time that parents' consanguinity leads to mental diseases in offspring (110). Dr. Abraham also observes that, although sometimes cousins marry for practical reasons, in many cases it is neuropathic individuals, who tend to prefer marriage with

a close relative (110-1). He further states the fact that some men with a homosexual persuasion tend to marry their cousins. "Since those men are hardly sexually attracted to the opposite sex they choose a relative out of idleness" (114).

43. Compare to "Das tägliche Leben" where the narrator ironically describes the younger daughter's marriage: "She will sing and be happy about her insignificant life, as if never a shadow had clouded the shine of its monotony -- clear and shallow as a mirror" (626). See also "Erste Trennung" where Emmi, the protagonist, sarcastically remarks that her husband considers their relationship "ideal' because she lives vicariously through him (546). He never notices in her eyes the "quiet suffering struggling for release" (547).

PART TWO

ASPIRING DRAMATIST (1849-1873)

Do not consider yourself poor,
because your dreams have not
come true. Only those are poor
who have never dreamed at all.

CHAPTER 1

"WHO VENTURES INTO PUBLIC LIFE..."

As a consequence of the Revolution of 1848 and in order to forestall further threats, the Engineering Academy, where Moritz taught, was moved from the capital city to the countryside. A former Premonstratensian monastery at Klosterbruck near Znaim in Southern Moravia had been converted into a military institution, which also housed the living quarters of the teachers and officers. Thus in the fall of 1849 Marie, Moritz, and Helene von Ebner-Eschenbach moved to Klosterbruck, where they established themselves quite comfortably. Moritz recalls in his "Erinnerungen": "We moved into a pretty apartment with a view of both the Thaya valley and the garden of the academy. Life in Klosterbruck was far less expensive than in Vienna: we almost considered ourselves rich and we had a carriage and riding horses. Often we received visits from friends and relatives" (III,2).

For Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach's intellectual development the years in Klosterbruck became very important. The nearby town of Znaim with its picturesque Renaissance and Baroque houses held many attractions because of the magic of its historic memories. It had been a fortress of the Premysls, the earliest dynasty in Bohemia, until the mid-thirteenth century. Its castle was renowned for its chapel of St. Catherine and for the many precious frescoes of the Premysl princes (EB vol 12, 926). Znaim further had been the meeting place of Archduke Charles and Napoleon Bonaparte



Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach in 1849

after the battle of Wagram. On July 12, 1809 they had concluded an armistice which considerably diminished Austria's power in Europe (Kann 224).

Except for the theatre Marie Ebner did not miss the big city. The closeness of her husband's colleagues made for ample social life and, most importantly, she made the acquaintance of a scholar who taught history and German writing at the academy. Josef Weil became one of her most influential teachers whom she held in high esteem all her life. In the military environment of Klosterbruck he was the only one with whom she could share her interest in literature and theatre. Josef Weil, later ennobled and known as Ritter von Weilen, soon became a regular guest at the Ebner-Eschenbach's home and inspired Marie to take up serious study of German language and literature. His life-long friendship and his stimulating influence cannot be counted highly enough.

Born into a poor and very large Jewish family in the Bohemian town of Beraun, near Karlstein, Joseph Weil needed the financial aid of well-meaning relatives in order to be able to attend school in Prague. Yet since he became distracted by literary and acting interests, he neglected school-work whereupon his relatives withdrew their support. He then found occasional employment at small stages and was finally hired by the Theater in der Josefstadt in Vienna. There he fell in love with an actress and made the mistake of believing that he was her only lover. He committed the second, even more serious blunder of challenging another one of her lovers, a police-officer, who then had him arrested and put into the military for punishment. As it turned out this was a blessing in disguise, because army life taught him discipline and provided for him the

security of an established existence. Weil worked his way up in the army and soon became a teacher at the Engineering Academy. He married during his stay in Klosterbruck and was eventually called to become director of the Vienna court library. He wrote Tristan, a dramatic poem, which launched his career as a dramatist. In later years he became Imperial Counsellor, Ritter der Eisernen Krone, and was appointed editor of Die österreichische Monarchie in Wort und Bild, a journal established by Crown Prince Rudolf. In his capacity as president of the association Concordia, Weil came into contact with writers and publishers from abroad. In 1873 he invited Julius Rodenberg to Vienna and introduced him personally to Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach. Weil, therefore, became one of the first to help launch Ebner-Eschenbach's career in Austria (B I 37).

Since Moritz was often away on extended business trips -- some of them occasioned by wars, some by invitations to exhibitions and displays of military novelties -- Marie had ample time to herself for reading and writing and for studying her favourite subjects, history, German language and literature. For the first time in her life she was free from the control of a father who had only contempt for the "Gelahrten"(the learned) and who had always objected to Marie's interest in intellectual occupations.

Relieved of the many social obligations life in Vienna imposed upon her as a member of the aristocracy, she tried to utilize her time to educate herself and to build a valid sense of identity. She also used the opportunity to familiarize herself with the course of things in the military. As the descendant of a family that had provided the country with a number of dedicated and distinguished soldiers she easily fitted into the new milieu. Her works Bozena and "Rittmeister Brand" would later reveal



Josef von Weilen

how well acquainted she had become with the military ethos, the jargon and the role of honour, by which all soldiers were bound. As she later confessed to her friend, Dr. Josef Breuer, army life fascinated her so much that she thought she would take a passionate interest in it until her "last breath" (BC 116).

In 1855 she was able to visit Venice, the magnificent city built on numerous islets within a lagoon in the Adriatic Sea. Exactly eleven years earlier Moritz had been there during his inspection trip to Dalmatia with Count Theodor Latour (EME II,5). Now Marie embarked on her first trip abroad. The city with its narrow canals, majestic bridges and buildings in Byzantine style impressed her so much that eight years later she still mentioned it in her diary (TB I 7). Even in old age, during her second trip to Venice, she ecstatically commented on it: "For my eye there are no more beautiful buildings than the Venetian ones. So fantastically rich, so gracious and bright" (B II 253).

Back in Klosterbruck she got together again with her newly found friend Henriette Tunkler. She was the wife of one of Moritz' colleagues at the Engineering Academy, a woman who held Marie in high regard and who would later always give her moral support, when Moritz tried to discourage her from writing.

In 1858 Marie Ebner, craving to be recognized as a professional writer, secretly published a prose work at her own expense. She dedicated it to Henriette, who had shortly before accompanied her to Franzensbad, a famous but boring high-class spa in Bohemia. Inspired by George Sand's travelogues and Heinrich Heine's Reisebilder Ebner-

Eschenbach had written a satire in which she vented all her frustrations about the conditions she had encountered at that health resort.

Aus Franzensbad consists of six rather sarcastic letters written by a young, mischievous lady who springs from Marie Ebner's own roots. She has a very critical eye for the flaws of her surroundings and the shortcomings of her fellowmen. She addresses her epistles to her pedantic, humourless doctor, on whose advice she is taking the waters at Franzensbad. Not only does she criticize the old-fashioned spa, but she also pours her venom on the Austrian government and its postal services. She further bitterly complains about the Austrian aristocracy, the stratum to which she herself obviously belongs. She is indignant about its arrogance and superficiality and reminds her doctor of how far it has strayed from the "mighty aristocratic lion that until a few centuries ago had so vigorously used its paws" (108).

She also ridicules the Jewish visitors, imitating their manner of speaking and reviling their penchant for money making. Finally she expresses her indignation about German critics who ignore Austrian literature and belittle the country's greatest writers. Her doctor is appalled and predicts that she will create enemies with her "dangerous book" (118). But she remains undeterred, insisting that it be published.

In a nutshell Aus Franzensbad contained most of the themes and subjects that would later energize Ebner-Eschenbach's work. Marie Ebner never again wrote anything as cheeky, witty and devastatingly satirical as this booklet. But she soon regretted having published it. In her youthful exuberance and eagerness to become publicly known as a writer she did not realize that Aus Franzensbad, written by an unknown woman author,

would not sell (KL 276). She also did not expect her relatives to so much begrudge the fact that she had dared to run down her peers and to appear in public with her work. For the first time she became painfully aware how profoundly she had offended against aristocratic conventions that considered professional writing and publication a rejection of the established norms (Bramkamp 28).¹ We can only speculate what Marie Ebner had to endure from her family after the appearance of her satire. Over the years she came to dislike it so much that she finally wrote: "Against the booklet Aus Franzensbad I have the same aversion a mother feels against an illegitimate child" (ZT 719). She may have deeply regretted her mockery of Jews, since she later found her best friends among them.² She also knew by that time that, as her fictional doctor had predicted, she indeed had created animosity among her class and that especially a highly placed, socially eminent lady bore her a lifelong grudge. Marie Ebner therefore distanced herself from her first work, in order not to estrange more of her peers. She may have felt like Baron Schwarzburg of "Komtesse Paula" who realized that he could not tear himself away from his milieu even though he had many reasons to complain about it:

Struggle against the mighty element of human nature; waste your strength in the most useless of struggles! Wrench yourself free from all those who follow new, joyous pursuits, from those who were your equals, your associates, your brothers. You have become their adversary. You oppose their interests, you deny their convictions and yet, you cling with every fiber of your heart to them (Harriman 78).

Finally, in the 1890s, at a time when she was widely known and admired as the "poetess of kindness" she must have thought with embarrassment of her uncharitable comments about her fellow citizens (Rossbacher 8). Her first venture into the literary world had taught her an important lesson.

In an aphorism she would later state: "Who ventures into public life can neither expect nor demand indulgence" (Reclam 19).

In 1856, after Moritz' promotion to Major and after his admission to the "Genie-Comité", the Ebner-Eschenbachs moved back to Vienna. With his great knowledge of explosives Moritz was much in demand in the capital. He helped to demolish the old city wall which had separated the inner city from the suburbs and was removed in order to allow the development of the famous Ringstrasse. His sea mines were used to protect the Austrian fleet in war times.

Meanwhile Marie resumed her lessons with Mr. Böhm, her former teacher of German language and literature, who now became her "only confidant and unfortunately a far too lenient critic" (KL 277). In spite of her disappointment over Aus Franzensbad and in spite of her family's opposition she did not give up writing. In "Aus Meinen Kinder- und Lehrjahren" she recalls: "Henceforth I kept silent about my secret work and devoted only those hours to it to which nobody made the slightest claim. But I was not released from my unfortunate love of writing, although there were hours when I was ashamed of it" (277). The motto she had used in Aus Franzensbad -- "toil on! I have spoken my dearest word, the most magnificent, the most beautiful in all life" (138) -- became her guiding principle.

At that time she read William Robertson's History of Scotland in a German translation. She was instantly fascinated by the work and started doing research in Scottish history. In contrast to Schiller's drama, which presents only the last phase of Maria Stuart's life, she intended to delineate the Scottish Queen's tragic fate during the years she spent in

her country before being exiled. When Mr. Böhm joined the Ebners for the weekly dinner, Marie Ebner secretly gave him her manuscript and then waited with the greatest suspense for his judgement.

I was not as diffident as at other occasions; the hope to succeed was not extinguished at the moment in which the work was complete before me. The people who for three weeks had clearly lived, sinned, and suffered before me were still mightily influencing me, after their fate had fulfilled itself. Should they not make their impressions upon others? (KL 277).

Within a week she hoped to have Mr. Böhm's reply. Yet, he sent his letter already the next day, telling her how pleasantly surprised and how impressed he was and predicting a brilliant success for this drama. As Ebner-Eschenbach recalls in her "Kinder und Lehrjahre":

Now began a time for me - a good time for everyone who has once lived through it! -- All the bliss, which a beautiful expectation, a firm hope, can give to a human heart I then enjoyed. It was perfect, unalloyed happiness, because it remained only in the realm of fantasy. I kept the outside world far away from it, it did not throw a shadow, a dissonance into it (277).

The manuscript was published and she sent it to all the major stages in Austria and Germany. She also sent it to Eduard Devrient, director of the Court Theater at Karlsruhe, requesting him to have it examined with a view to performance. In her covering letter she did everything to hide the fact that she was a woman. Her experience with Aus Franzensbad may have alerted her to the difficulties women writers had to face when trying to publish their work. She also knew that drama belonged to the male domain and that only a few women had ever succeeded in having their works performed.

She had seen plays by Johanna Weissenthurn, Amalie Heiter and Charlotte Birch-Pfeiffer on stage, but her work belonged to the field of

"high drama" which was still considered the monopoly of men (Gnüg 242). She also knew that Frau von Weissenthurn and Frau Birch-Pfeiffer had long been known as actresses before they ventured to write plays of their own (Bramkamp 49). Marie Ebner therefore wrote the following lines in her covering letter to Devrient:

By taking the liberty to transmit to you my drama 'Maria Stuart in Schottland' for examination I submit it to the judgement, the favourable or unfavourable decision of which can become an existential question for the young dramatist... With this address submits this work your most devoted servant M.v. Ebner-Eschenbach. (B II 311).

Once the drama was accepted, Marie thought proudly to announce to her relatives: "Look, there is something to my talent, I have succeeded after all" (KL 271). Weeks and weeks passed without a reply from the stage directors and the young author's optimism gradually changed to increasing dejection.

My beautiful, red-cheeked dreams and hopes had become by and by rather pale and nebulous. The grey background, reality began to shine through them. Not one response which would have been somehow promising, had come in for all my nicely packaged parcels to the theater directors, accompanied by extremely polite covering letters (278).

One day, however, while on a visit to Zdislawitz, she was reading Otto Ludwig's Die Makkabäer to Xaverine and secretly mused about the author whose talent she thought much superior to her own. Suddenly she was interrupted by a servant, who handed over a bundle of letters to her stepmother. Contrary to her habit Marie did not ask whether there was any mail for her. With a wildly beating heart she stared into her book, hardly daring to breathe. Countess Dubsky then handed her a blue envelope from Karlsruhe, addressed to "M.von Eschenbach", the name with which Marie had signed her letter to Eduard Devrient. He warmly praised

"Maria Stuart" and promised to study and rehearse the piece "with the same care and love as Otto Ludwigs Makkabäer" (KL 278). That coincidence struck Marie Ebner like lightning. A moment earlier she had read Die Makkabäer and now her own drama would receive the same honour as Otto Ludwig's masterpiece. She was in raptures. Devrient was true to his word and soon performed Maria Stuart in Karlsruhe, where it remained in the repertoire for a full three years (KL 279).

Contrary to Schiller and Ludwig, who both portray Maria Stuart as an accomplice to her husband's assassination, Marie Ebner saw her heroine as completely innocent. She endowed her with all her own ideals of honesty and fidelity and delineated her as a victim of men's greed for domination and power. Her Maria Stuart is a young, passionate woman, craving for friendship. Her credulity in men's professions of love becomes her undoing.

The drama starts shortly after Rizzio, Maria Stuart's court musician and confidant, has been murdered. All of Scotland is in an uproar. The queen hurries to Holyrood to preside over the court where the murder charges are laid. She does not know that Darnley, her husband, is the assassin and therefore innocently convicts people from his entourage. She loves her husband, yet he does not care for her anymore. All he strives for is power and the long-desired matrimonial crown which his wife has so far withheld from him. He had murdered Rizzio because he knew that the latter possessed the queen's unconditional trust. He also had suspected that his wife had an adulterous relationship with the musician.

Maria Stuart, deeply offended by these unfounded accusations, turns to Lord Bothwell, her military adviser. He is a man of bravery and, as she



Otto Ludwig

believes, of great honesty. He had once defended her mother, Mary of Guise, against the "Lords of the Congregation" and now he becomes her own stronghold and support. Marie Stuart neglects her husband, giving herself up to her infatuation with Bothwell. Darnley, upon discovering his wife's affair, threatens to inform all the rulers of Europe and also tries to remove the recently born heir apparent from Maria Stuart's care.

Bothwell does not love the queen but only craves to become King of Scotland. One night he blows up Darnley's castle, in which the latter had spent the night. Now the way seems free for Bothwell to gain Maria Stuart's hand in marriage and the precious Scottish crown. Despite Bothwell's precautions all of Scotland soon knows that he murdered Darnley, and Maria Stuart is accused of having been his accomplice in the crime. Yet she defends him against the indictment, firmly believing in his innocence, and finally even marries him. In the meantime her subjects have become restless. The lords try to kill Bothwell, as the country is faced with a civil war. Only now Maria Stuart realizes that Bothwell assassinated her husband out of desire for the crown. In utter despair she agrees to be taken to England to find shelter at her cousin Elizabeth's court (Necker 1-12).

Eduard Devrient found "Eschenbach's" portrait of the Scottish Queen intriguing and appreciated its "dramatic power and vitality" (B II 316). In his judgement the work was superior to all other dramas submitted to him that year. Devrient was a well known and respected personality in the world of German theater. He had been trained as a singer. After losing his voice he became a renowned actor in Berlin and a few years later he was appointed director at the Dresden theatre. In 1852 he became head of the



Eduard Devrient between 1860 and 1870

Karlsruhe stage where he hoped to realize his artistic goals, which included the cultivation of works by German neo-classicists (Kabel XVIII). Unlike the artistic director of the Burg who had a penchant for French plays and hesitated to employ young actors, Devrient preferred German works and strongly believed in furthering budding talents (Weilen XXXVI).

In fact he was so impressed with Maria Stuart that he nominated it for the Schillerpreis. But, in the end, the prize was awarded to Hebbel's Nibelungen (B I 52). Devrient also sent a copy of the work to the writer and drama critic Otto Ludwig. The latter analyzed it carefully and, although he found a number of flaws, gave the following verdict: "As regards skills, and that which one looks for in technique, the author without a question surpasses every other member of his school so far; he also seems to possess the gift of poetry in an unusual fashion. Especially, he is not lacking in rhetorical power" (qtd. in Bramkamp 4).

Marie's course for a successful career as a dramatist seemed to be set. Still, her dearest dream was to see her work performed at the prestigious Burgtheater in Vienna. As Stefan Zweig records about this venerable institution:

To have one's play given at the Burgtheater was the greatest dream of every Viennese writer, because it meant a sort of lifelong nobility and brought with it a series of honors such as complimentary tickets for life and invitations to all official functions. One virtually became a guest in the Imperial household (The World 15).

Marie Ebner also knew that by having her work performed on stage she would reach a large part of society. Her favourite genre was the historical drama, her role model was Schiller, after whose work she desired to mold her own. Encouraged by Devrient, in whose judgement she firmly believed, Marie hoped to conquer the Viennese scene. Since she had signed her

letter to Devrient with "M.von Eschenbach" he had assumed her to be a male author. Critics who saw the first performance of Maria Stuart in 1860 in Karlsruhe thought likewise and, since the author's name was as yet unknown in theatre circles, speculation as to who he would be soon began. One reviewer went as far as to claim that the newly discovered dramatist was living in a monastery (B I 52). Yet Marie Ebner's incognito was all too soon destroyed, and for a while she had to give up hope to fight her battle "behind a closed visor" (B II 313).

Arnold Hirsch, a former medical doctor turned feuilletonist and dramatist, who knew the Ebner-Eschenbachs, came to visit Devrient in Karlsruhe in the fall of 1861 and revealed the true identity of the author of Maria Stuart (Devrient II 393). Marie therefore had no choice but to make a clear breast of it. She wrote to Devrient:

You are asking me sincerely who I am, highly revered Sir, and thus I have to answer with sincerity. I am really just a poor woman, the wife of the good and brave Lieutenant-Colonel to whom you directed all your letters. Please do not tell anybody, I implore you! And you yourself, if possible, please forget it. Because I wished to be judged without pity or regard, because I did not want to be treated with indulgence, I could not tell the noble and chivalrous Devrient that his judgements were passed on the work of a woman. And thus I implore you: you must not spare me now either. One who loves art, lives and dies for it as I do, must be able to see her fondest hopes flounder if they do not come up to the high ideals which her cause demands. No special considerations, please, highly revered Sir. You are the classical -- I may say immortal -- writer, the great artist. I am the insignificant beginner. So we face each other. Please permit me to continue to call myself your worshipper, your grateful pupil (BII 313).

However distressed she was that her identity had been revealed, she insisted on continuing to use a pseudonym. She also knew that audiences were prejudiced against women writers. In another letter to Devrient she wrote:

I am quite sad that my incognito was betrayed so soon. You may say what you want, but the public has reservations towards women's ambitions in the arts (except acting). Could it not be otherwise? Or is it not good that it is so? The inner struggles, the contradictions, the storms and urges out of which every work of art is born, do not seem to elicit sympathy, when they have been suffered through by a woman (B II 312).

She excused the public's resistance to women dramatists on account of their inner contradictions and struggles of the soul. She did not blame society for causing these problems for women.

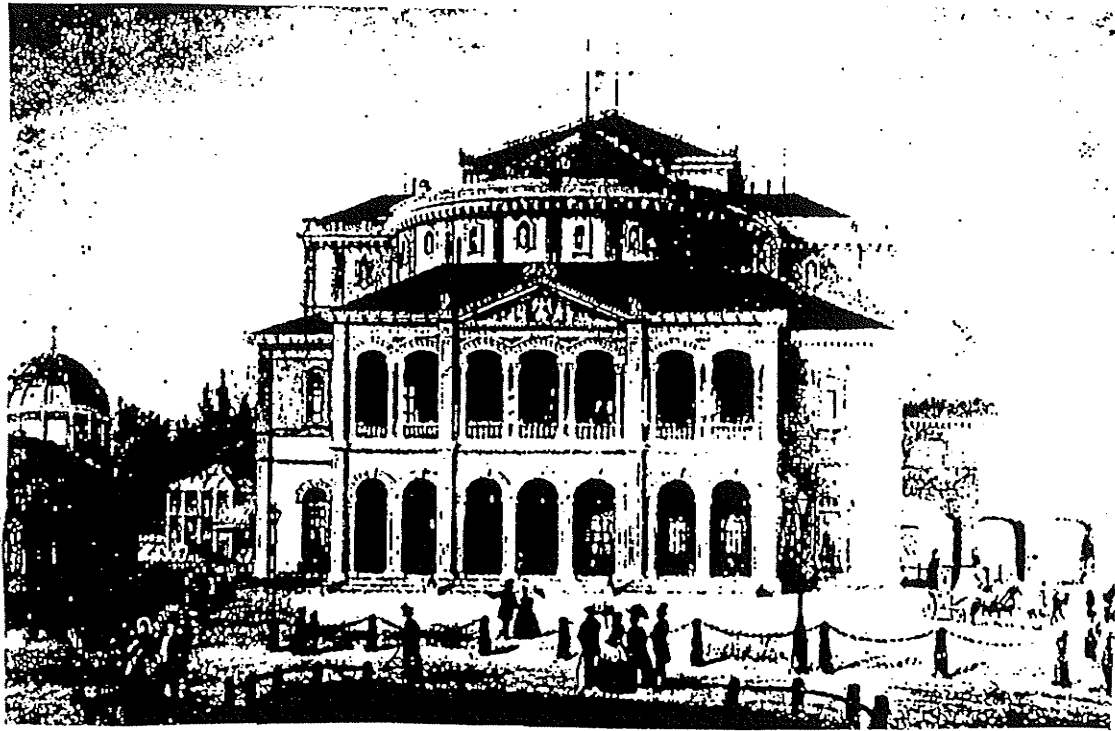
Devrient was highly astonished to learn that "M.von Eschenbach" was a woman. He wrote in his diary on Nov 3, 1861: "So, a poetess; that is surprising in view of this masculine spirit" (Kabel 391). On November 8, 1861 he remarked: "Letter from Eschenbach: reveals herself as Frau von Ebner but demands to be taken for a man and to be treated without special consideration. She takes criticism of her piece very well, amiably and good naturedly" (ibid. 393).

Meanwhile Marie Ebner nurtured the hope that, on account of Devrient's positive judgement of her work, her relatives would now also give their blessing for her professional career. In her letter of January 1862 to her mentor in Karlsruhe she sounded quite optimistic: "Now the worst battles are behind me. Your interest in my endeavours ennobles them in the eyes of many who otherwise would not grant them the right to exist. I cannot repeat often enough: I thank you for something unspeakable -- I thank you for your goodness" (B II 314). She also sent him her photograph as a token of friendship and asked for his picture in return. From then on she kept him informed about all her new projects for the theatre.

In July 1863, upon her return from a vacation in Switzerland, Marie Ebner realized her long-cherished wish personally to meet Eduard Devrient and to see a performance of Maria Stuart in Karlsruhe. The drama with Helene Lange in the lead had been on the repertoire for three years and Marie had never had a chance to enjoy it on stage. After the many rejections she had received from other stage directors Devrient's encouraging reports about rehearsals and performances at his theatre had been a great support. How often had Marie been downcast, full of doubts in her talent, and how often had the thought of Devrient's belief in her given her new hope.

Now she had a chance to meet the admired director face to face and to share with him all her concerns about her work. The two got along extremely well and Devrient, usually somewhat withdrawn, spoke freely about his problems with his staff and with the critics. He advised Marie Ebner to take up the battle against malicious reviewers and to fight an honest war with them (TB I 15). In later years the two met again at the health resort Bad Kissingen. Yet, although Devrient kept up his interest in Marie Ebner's dramatic work, he never performed another of her plays in Karlsruhe. In 1875 she dedicated her first collection of Erzählungen to him, thanking him for his support and friendship.

In 1863 she still worked unwaveringly towards her dearest goal of having her dramas performed at the Burg, although she knew that Laube, the director, much preferred comedies. In a letter to Devrient she once voiced her concern: "The present trend of public taste and the great and irresponsible predilection of our directors for French comedy have almost totally excluded serious drama from the Burgtheater; a new poet who



Court-theatre Karlsruhe,

enters with a tragedy is courting battle with three powerful adversaries: the directors, the public and the critics" (B II 314/15). Would she ever be able to win the battle against these mighty foes?

She had by then given up hope of seeing Maria Stuart staged at the Burg, because she had learned that the mighty Laube did not like it (TB I 7). Heinrich Laube was born in Sprottau (Saxony) in 1806 and, after initially preparing for the Lutheran ministry, became a journalist and a prominent advocate of the literary movement "Junges Deutschland" (Young Germany). In 1834 he had to leave Saxony because of his expressed sympathies for the French Revolution. His literary work was prohibited by the German Bundestag. Yet, under the director Franz von Holbein, Laube's theatre pieces were performed in Vienna. In 1848 he became a member of the Frankfurt Assembly and in 1849 he was appointed director of the Vienna Burgtheater, which he brought to lasting fame (Adam 533).

His rather tyrannical nature benefitted the theatre greatly, since he had high standards and high artistic goals. He also had a keen perception of people and of dramatic accomplishment. Yet under his regime the Burgtheater never much supported native talent, since Laube was far more interested in attracting talents from abroad (Lothar 100). For him not the dramatists but the actors were of prime importance, because he knew how much the audience adored them.⁴ The main reason for his preference of comedy was the fact that Viennese audiences loved light entertainment and were prepared to pay for it.

Laube's rejection of Maria Stuart did, however, not discourage Marie from continuing to write dramas. She still firmly believed in her muse which, in her view, needed only "a friendly ray of sunshine in order to

remain loyal" to her (B II 315). In the spring of 1861 she had begun reading the biography of Jacobäa of Jülich-Cleve, a fascinating woman, who had lived during the time of the Counter Reformation. She was to become the heroine of her next tragedy. Yet, after writing two acts, Marie Ebner realized that the characters involved were "too gloomy" for her (B II 316). Her next work centered around a strong and single-minded woman, the type of person Marie Ebner would admire all her life.

Helene Walter, the heroine of Die Schauspielerin, is an actress who defies the prejudices of her family and devotes herself wholeheartedly to her art. When she meets Baron Waldau, a man she deeply respects and ultimately loves, she momentarily thinks of sacrificing her career for him. Yet soon she finds out that he despises the art of acting, and therefore she breaks off her relationship with him. Her art and her self-realization have to come first in her life.

Devrient, although praising Die Schauspielerin for its "superb dialogue" (Devrient II 393), considered it a failure as a drama and could not accept it for his stage. Heinrich Laube gave the same reasons for his refusal to stage the play at the Burg. Like Devrient he felt that Die Schauspielerin should be published as a book and thus would bring Marie Ebner honour and satisfaction (B I 65).

Only Julie Rettich, the renowned Burgtheater actress, instantly liked the work and performed it at various stages on her tour through Germany. Yet the sweeping success Marie Ebner had hoped for failed to materialize. Finally she decided to write a comedy in the hope of gaining the long desired access to the Burg. If that was what Laube wanted, then she would provide it for him. She conceived Die Veilchen, a one-act-play in which a

young countess, obsessed with the habit of unconditionally telling the truth, learns that white lies are a necessity to get along in society. Laube instantly liked the play and accepted it for performance at the Burg. Marie Ebner's dream had come true: after all her toil and labour she would finally see her work performed on Austria's most prestigious stage.

CHAPTER 2:

"THE LEAST FREE PERSON IN THE WHOLE WORLD"

On May 13, 1863, the comedy Die Veilchen was performed at the Burgtheater. Shortly before the great event, Heinrich Laube had wanted to cancel it, because he feared the work contained "too much for one act and too little for the clear plasticity the audience needs" (B I 69). Yet the actors, Auguste Baudius, Amalie Haizinger, Therese Pechel and Adolf Sonnenthal had played so well during the dress rehearsal that the director's doubts had vanished and he had given his consent to the performance. To Marie Ebner's great relief the audience received Die Veilchen very favourably, yet the reviews in the papers the next day were disastrous. Die Presse commented: "Pretty idea, but executed without skill" and Marie added in her diary: "Quite right. All the other newspapers dreadfully malicious" (TB 9). She knew that although she had tried to do her best, she had not been able to meet her own standards. Her social obligations almost overwhelmed her and drove her to despair (TB I 10).

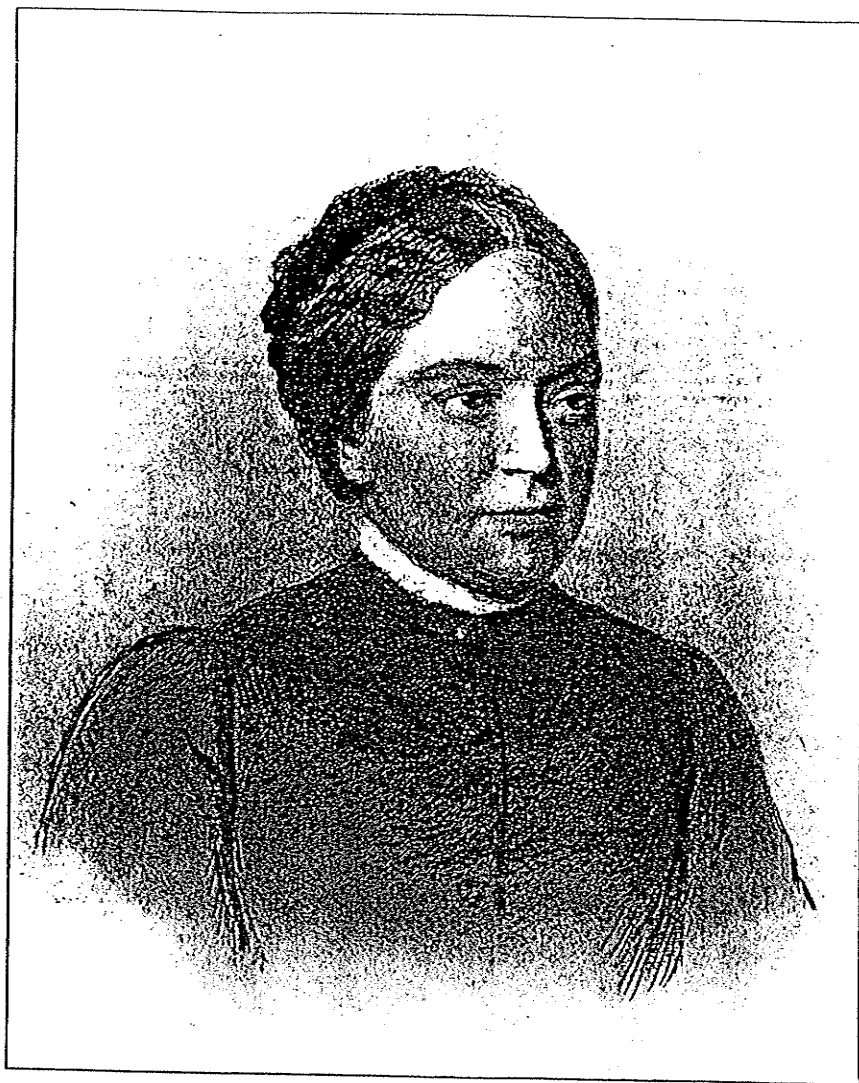
Frequently left alone by her husband who continued to travel in his capacity as a military engineer, she had to cope with running the household, looking after the servants, nursing her sick mother-in-law, and fulfilling the many duties required of a lady of her class. The social net in which she lived was tightly organized, demanding that she be available whenever relatives, friends, and acquaintances needed her.⁵

She therefore had made it a habit to start the day at six o'clock in the morning, to devote the early hours, no one else claimed, to her literary work. Although this time rightfully belonged to her, she often had a guilty conscience because she knew that Moritz and her relatives objected to her writing. In a letter to her friend, the poet Hieronymus Lorm, she once complained:

I am the least free person in the whole world. Every day of my life has already been disposed of, my writing and everything that has to do with it are, properly speaking, a thorn in the eye of my dear ones. I am forgiven my "poetising" only under the condition that none of my obligations suffer the slightest disadvantage (BF 69).

It was her duty to daily receive visitors and pay social calls. After the visiting hours in the morning, when she sometimes attended to up to six or seven guests, who each dropped in one after the other to pay their respects, Marie Ebner had to entertain people at lunch, and in the afternoon she herself had to embark on a round of visits. For dinner she often had company as well and afterwards, at least four times a week, she went to the theatre where she sometimes fell asleep from exhaustion. If she was not invited to her parents' or some friends' house after the performance she could spend some time with her husband or alone at home, thinking and dreaming about her literary work, before she went to bed, tired and exhausted after a hectic day.

Her diaries abound with entries in which she complains about her strenuous social life and her relatives' lack of understanding for the importance of her work. On January 25, 1865 we read: "I was hoping to finish the second act. It was impossible. My dearly beloved relatives consider every hour I spend with my work a waste. Dearest! Yet you believe the time well disposed of, which I spend, yawning, with the most



Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach in 1867

insignificant people who bore me as well as themselves" (TB I 41). And further we learn: "In the morning not a moment for my work. With parents, then with Papa in the city park. Leo with me. Guido and Alfons at meals. Evening with grandmother" (TB I 90). Again: "Wrote nothing at all -- the entire morning not half a minute to myself" (TB 91). To Hieronymus Lorm she once wrote:

Dealing with most people is a thankless task. They gain nothing from us, we nothing from them and despite all this we carry with us to the bitter end the heavy chains of obligations towards people to whom we owe nothing at all - in irons like a galley slave. When I start some new work (as now) I am sometimes gripped -- God knows -- by a veritable sense of despair about the time I am wasting (BF 67).

When a family member was ill "Auntie Marie" was expected to help out and to adopt the role of a nurse. Thus she spent several weeks with Fritz's children who had the whooping cough, and another time day and night looked after her brother Adolph who had arrived in Vienna with a worrisome throat problem. In 1865 her sister-in-law Sophie had the smallpox and had to be separated from her three month old daughter in order not to infect her. Having no children of her own, Marie Ebner was expected to take the baby, the nursemaid and a wetnurse into her home for the time Sophie was ill. From Ebner's diary we know that she enjoyed having the baby, but was extremely bothered by the jealousy which had erupted between wetnurse and maid (TB I 43). Because of these family problems Marie Ebner often had no time at all for her work and could not help but be frustrated. Neither her husband nor any of her relatives understood her need to unfold her talent and her impulse to creative production.

Several times a year Marie Ebner was also expected to visit her relatives on their various estates. Fritzzi often invited her to Bürgstein, where she lived with her husband Count August Kinsky and their large family. Julie, her youngest sister, married to Duke Eberhard von Waldburg-Wurzach, whose first wife had been her and Marie Ebner's sister Sophie, wanted her to come to castle Reichenburg, and her cousin Marie Zay often asked her to stay some time with her in Bucsan in Hungary. As in her childhood and youth, Ebner-Eschenbach also spent several weeks every summer in Zdislawitz, where her brothers and sisters regularly came to visit with their families. There they rode together, went hunting, called on friends and relatives in the neighbourhood and sometimes read to each other in the evenings.

Marie enjoyed those family gatherings, yet often wished she had more time for her writing. On one occasion she confided in her diary: "In order to be completely happy I would need a few hours of complete solitude every day. Then I would be so happy that I would gladly agree to spend all winter in Zdislawitz" (TB I 122). Another entry stated: "What have I done? Nothing! My so-called profession does not rob me of much of my time. You can be pleased with me, my dear ones" (TB I 112).

Unable to discuss her professional goals with her relatives, Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach all the more longed for people who shared her literary interests. What would she have given to belong to a club of young literati where she could have read her works, discussed them and benefitted by critical analysis. She bitterly missed like-minded friends who could have stimulated her intellectually and artistically.⁶

Shortly after her drama Maria Stuart had been finished she had turned to Grillparzer, her idol, for counsel and judgement. Yet although he had patiently listened to her reading, commenting on it occasionally, she could sense that he had no interest in becoming her mentor and she vowed never to bother him with her work again (EG 887). Grillparzer was already in his seventies at the time and bitter about his failed career. Marie Ebner therefore soon realized that she needed another teacher. For a while she studied alone again, reading Schiller and Shakespeare and also analyzing Tieck's stageworks, in order to make progress in drama technique (B II 314).

She also kept up her correspondence with Devrient whom she regularly consulted about her work. He always faithfully responded. Yet being in far-away Karlsruhe and preoccupied with problems of his own he could give only the most superficial advice.

Josephine Knorr, with whom Marie sometimes met to discuss her poems, could help her polish up her verses but knew next to nothing about dramatic technique. Yet she may have suggested that Marie Ebner approach a man who by then was a celebrity at the Burg. Baron Eligius Franz Josef Münch-Bellinghausen, in literary circles known as Friedrich Halm, seemed to Marie Ebner the ideal teacher. Born in Krakau in 1806 he had come to Austria in his youth and ever since devoted himself to the study of literature. At thirty-nine he had become Imperial Councilor and had obtained the coveted position of court librarian. In 1835 his first drama Giseldis had been performed at the Burg, where henceforth all his other plays were accepted. Especially his Sohn der Wildnis and Der

Fechter von Ravenna had brought him great popular and critical acclaim (Nadler 315).

Halm agreed to come to Marie's home every Sunday afternoon and to teach her dramatic theory and technique. His models were the great sixteenth and seventeenth-century Spanish dramatists, whose style and theatrical flair he tried to imitate. Like Lope de Vega, whom he particularly admired, Halm combined rational and fantastic elements in his work. He knew exactly what his audiences liked and by appealing to their patriotic emotions, always drew large crowds (Lothar 127).

Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach now was extremely happy to have a friend with whom she could discuss her work. She talked to Halm about her projects, and he gave her advice on matters regarding props and setting and as to how the action was to be set up. He recognized Marie's talent and after each lesson encouraged her to develop it. Praise like "you will make a lot of noise in the world" (TB I 165) helped her to build up her confidence in the teeth of her suspicious and prejudiced relatives.

Yet as it turned out, except for the key elements of dramatic art, Marie Ebner could not learn very much from her new teacher. While she strove for depth of content and originality of interpretation, he stressed structure and theatrical effect and insisted that she emulate his own ideas and methods (TB I 30). He was unable to help her to develop her own conception of dramatic art. With his dogmatic attitude -- "I would do it that way and you should do so too" (TB I 30) -- he stifled her artistic creativity and kept her in the shackles of his own epigonism. Halm firmly believed in the importance of writing one's plays for certain actors (TB I

150) and knew that especially in Vienna the success of a work depended on the performers' personality.

Since Julie Rettich, a renowned Burgtheater actress he adored, was looking for a new leading part, Halm asked Ebner-Eschenbach to write a play for her. She was honoured and wrote Die Heimkehr, a play which dealt with the conflict between the hereditary aristocracy and the new moneyed elite. Yet work on this drama did not go well, since Marie realized that she did not like to tailor it to the needs of a specific performer. She also was bothered by Halm's and Rettich's constant suggestions and interferences with which she obviously did not agree (TB I 7). Frustrated and downcast she confided in her diary: "I wrote little and the little is bad. I am unwell, moody, unmotivated in the highest degree. I have to change Die Heimkehr constantly, but not always with the conviction that it is for the better" (TB I 6). Another time she sighed: "In the morning with Frau Rettich. We bargained for two hours about Die Heimkehr. She is right in everything, she is an excellent woman and artist. I love and admire her, but I shall never again write a part for an actress" (TB I 7).

After many changes and revisions Friedrich Halm was finally satisfied and Julie Rettich performed her role in Die Heimkehr in 1863 on her tour to Northern Germany. Critics praised her performance but lampooned the author of the play, maliciously pointing out that it came from "the pen of a South German aristocratic lady" (TB I 14). Marie Ebner was thus faced with two prejudices on the part of the theatre critics. In their eyes neither as a woman nor as an aristocrat she counted much.

Again, on Halm's request, Marie revised Die Heimkehr but became very despondent and seriously began to doubt her talent (TB I 24). In March 1864 Julie Rettich played her part in the drama to Hamburg and again had enormous success while Marie Ebner was left empty-handed. Her teacher, who had promised to brief her about the performance, cancelled his appointment with her, causing her unbearable agony. In her diary she wrote: "Good Friday. One of those days one does not want to endure twice in one's life. I fell asleep in agony and woke up again in agony" (TB I 28). Herr Rettich, the actress's husband, finally broke the bad news: critics in Hamburg had lampooned her play in the same way as those in Berlin.

Despite this shattering experience Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach went on writing for the stage. Encouraged by Halm, who continued to believe in her talent, she worked on her drama Das Geständnis in which she explored the theme of adultery. A relative of Xaverine, Count Zdenko Kolowrat, translated the play into Czech and to Marie's great joy it was accepted by the theatre in Prague. This time she had used a pseudonym with a truly bourgeois ring -- M. Haller -- hoping to win her battle against prejudiced reviewers. But again she was defeated. The Czech daily Die Politik wrote: "The heroes are veritable bundles of opposites and exquisite contradictions. The participants did their utmost to keep Das Geständnis afloat by good acting, that was to some measure successful" (Veselý 233).

Again Ebner-Eschenbach was deeply hurt and disappointed and began to lose more and more of her self-confidence. Each defeat meant a victory for Moritz and her relatives who now in all seriousness were trying



F. Halm, drawing of J. Dannhauser 1840

to prevent her from writing for the stage. They resented the fact that a member of their family was lampooned by the press and also feared that Moritz' career would be damaged because of Marie's obsession. Repeatedly Moritz tried to persuade her to switch to writing poems or novels, but Marie could not heed his advice (TB I 76). She wanted to prove to herself and to her loved ones that she had the talent to achieve success on stage. As she once wrote in her diary to comfort herself in difficult times: "Do not lose heart, I tell myself after each bad experience. I still have a few friends who believe in me and who know: she cannot help it, she cannot give up writing as one gives up a bad habit" (TB I 164).

It took enormous strength and willpower to tackle another stage piece, but Marie's mind was made up: she was determined to write another tragedy. Inspired by a visit to the Burg and by reading Lamartine's Les G rondins she conceived Marie Roland, a drama similar to Maria Stuart, with whose heroine she could closely identify. Strong, outstanding women had always fascinated her, and to describe their life held a special attraction.

Marie Roland is the beautiful, virtuous and brilliant wife of Jean-Marie Roland, the leader of the G rondins, a faction of bourgeois revolutionaries during the French Revolution. Her husband, whom she does not love but greatly respects, is much older than she. He knows that she loves Buzat, a leader of the Girondins, and wants to grant her a divorce, so that she can marry the man of her choice. Yet, although Marie Roland had fought for the right of women to get a divorce independent of the Church, she herself cannot leave her husband and her family: "Because

they who now live and those who shall come in the future must not say 'Look, she did it for herself'" (qtd. in Necker 20).

The tragedy starts with a meeting of the Girondins in the Rolands' home. They are all upset because they have found out that their opponents, the Jacobins, are trying to stir up the people's animosity against them. A decision has to be made. Georges Danton, leader of the Jacobines, has offered a proposal for reconciliation. Should they accept it? Yet Marie Roland, who hates Danton, because he once competed against her husband, persuades the Girondins not to make peace with their enemies. Meanwhile Lodoïska, the common law wife of one of the Girondins, learns that the Jacobines are planning to kill them all the next morning. The Girondins take the necessary precautions. They send out one of their group to arrest the leaders of their opponents. But their plan fails, because they have been betrayed. Monsieur Roland is arrested. Only now, as a last resort, Marie Roland agrees to meet Danton and to discuss his offer of reconciliation. He immediately agrees to release her husband, under the condition that she unite herself with him, Danton. Being a woman of integrity she cannot comply with his wishes and thus rejects his proposal.

She foments hate between the provinces and Paris. She further alienates Danton from the Girondins and widens the split between the opposing factions. Yet the Jacobins are stronger and arrest her during an insurrection, when all the leading Girondins are expelled from the Convention. The final act deviates from the historic facts. Instead of having her heroine die as an atheist, Marie von Ebner transforms her into a penitent, longing for God. Marie Roland, having refused an offer to

escape unharmed, ruefully stays in prison to await her death and prays for her soul to be freed from delusion (Necker 12-26).¹

Marie Ebner's diaries of 1866 and 1867 show how much writing this tragedy preoccupied her. On February 26, 1866 she read the first act to her friend Auguste von Littrow, who obviously was deeply impressed. "If all who come to know the piece are as taken by it as Auguste, then Schiller on his Olympus will be shaking on his throne. A pity that one cannot get a quiet uninhibited judgement from this intelligent woman" (TB I 82). On March 1, 1866 she wrote: "Suffering a great deal, but very industrious. If my muse kept smiling on me for six more weeks as she does now, Marie Roland will be completed and perhaps not too badly. Did not get up all day. O head, keep going" (TB I 83). How much she appreciated being left to do her work is shown by her entry of March 7, 1866: "A good, industrious day. A little early promenade, then home and worked -- magnificent! -- without interruption!" (TB I 84). On October 22, 1866 Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach sighed during a visit to Bürgstein: "Spent all morning in the glass and porcelain factories of Haida. Afternoon writing in my room - O Marie Roland" (TB I 124). Four days later she wrote, somewhat more optimistically: "Promenade with Friederl and the children to the Brettsteig. Afternoon a little while to myself. The revision of Marie Roland begins to appear to be possible and fruitful, without having to put the whole thing on its head" (TB I 125). In November 1866 she was able to read the revised first act of Marie Roland to her sister Fritzi and a guest at Bürgstein. Both were quite moved by it (TB I 127).

Friedrich Halm, who supervised her work, was strongly impressed by the progress his student had made. In a letter to her he wrote: "Who still

doubts your talent, after reading Marie Roland, must be an idiot or an extremely jealous person" (B I 74). Yet he warned that the tragedy was "impractical" because of its revolutionary content (TB I 133).

In March 1867 Devrient confirmed Halm's misgivings by stating that Marie Roland would not be a success on stage because the "poisonous atmosphere" of the revolution had been presented too realistically. (TB I 162). Yet Marie Ebner remained hopeful about her work. On March 27, 1867 she sent the last act of Marie Roland to the printers, and then the manuscript went on its way to various stages in Austria and Germany.

Eduard Devrient, meeting Ebner-Eschenbach that summer in Bad Kissingen, did not want to disappoint her and promised to perform Marie Roland in Karlsruhe, once it had been accepted by the Burg in Vienna. Baron Loën, the stage director in Weimar, however, did not share Devrient's concerns and staged the tragedy in his provincial theatre. Critics assumed that the author "M.v.Eschenbach" was a male and a member of the Austrian aristocracy. They pointed out various weaknesses of the work but admitted that "the character of the heroine [was] cogent, and occasionally excellently drawn" (B II 321). Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach was triumphant about this news and was quite overwhelmed when she learned that the Duke of Weimar had asked a friend to convey his compliments to the author of Marie Roland (TB I 245).

Heinrich Laube also liked the work but suggested changes. He found some scenes too short and not delineated with the necessary empathy. He finally recommended the drama to the board of directors, well aware that it might be rejected by the censor because of its revolutionary content.

Emperor Joseph II had established censorship at the Burg in order to cleanse performances of dirty jokes and vulgarities. He wanted to preserve the decency of the theatre and to use it as a vehicle for moral and social education. Over the years theatre directors implemented additional rules and restrictions turning censorship into a "gag that stifled every sound" (Lothar 68). Authors who handed in their pieces at the Burg had to make sure that these did not contain expressions offensive to the court. They were not allowed verbally to attack the Burg directors and the artists and they were expected to propagate high moral standards in their works. Plays containing criticism of current affairs, of the Imperial family or of the Christian religion were rejected. So were pieces that dealt with historical events denouncing the monarchy or describing episodes disgracing the court and the Austrian elite. Dialogues were examined for decency of language. Words derived from the Bible or the catechism had to be eliminated and the words "holy" or "sin" were never tolerated in any work. Terms like "freedom" or "equality" or "enlightenment" were likewise highly suspicious and ran the risk of being deleted by the censor, if he accepted the work (Lothar 43).

By the time Laube submitted Marie Roland, censorship at the Burg had become intolerably petty. The censor rejected the drama on the grounds that the French Revolution was "still too recent an event" and that the name of the queen (Marie Antoinette) was mentioned in the piece (Lothar 132). Marie Ebner knew about the censors' narrow-mindedness and may not have been too astonished about the verdict. She may, however, have suspected a deeper and more far-reaching reason for the rejection. Shortly before submitting Marie Roland to Laube she had learned from a

friend that the Duchess Auersperg, the wife of the theatre manager Duke Vincent Auersperg, bore her a grudge. The duchess had been deeply offended by Marie's ironic description of the aristocracy in her first publication Aus Franzensbad (TB I 277). She had obviously taken Marie's criticism personally and had not understood its well-meant intent. Deeply imbued with the conviction of the Austrian aristocracy's superiority she must have resented the following observation about her class:

What our aristocracy is today one can see in its women and daughters as well as in its sons, who are destined to carry their old names. Indeed, there are lamentable conclusions to be drawn from its representatives with regard to one of the most noble institutions in the world. In everything it has abandoned substance for appearance and is content to be called what it no longer can be (103).

She further must have been enraged that in Ebner-Eschenbach's view aristocratic daughters had "never learned to think and to suffer" (106) and that their emotions, judgements and conversations were shallow (103). Offended in her vanity, pride and deepest convictions about her aristocratic origins, the duchess never forgave Ebner-Eschenbach these satirical observations, and what better way to take revenge than to try to thwart the latter's career as a dramatist? As far as the duchess' arm reached, Ebner-Eschenbach would not be successful. Not only may the duchess have asked her husband as the highest authority at the Burg to reject the works Ebner-Eschenbach submitted⁸, but she also had the power to influence the press.⁹ Some of the critics, who maliciously reviled Marie's plays, may have been strong supporters of the aristocracy and each of their negative reviews may have been a "ticket granting entry to a soirée" (Benesch 95). Thus the duchess did not even have to bribe the censors to reject a work or the critics to write disparaging reviews; a

regular invitation to her parties sufficed to secure their unflinching loyalty.

Marie was deeply concerned about Duchess Auersperg's resentment and referred to it twice in her diary that year. She knew that as far as the powerful lady's influence reached, the doors at the Burg would be closed for her. More than once Marie had regretted having published Aus Franzensbad, but now she took a profound dislike to it, since she knew it was the cause of active animosity.

Unfortunately, Laube who, on account of his position and authority could have tried to intervene for Marie Ebner at the Burg, resigned from his director-ship at that time. Duke Auersperg had appointed Friedrich Halm as superintendent and the latter soon tried to undermine the artistic director's responsibilities. So far it had been Laube's unrestricted right to decide on the repertoire and to look after the casting of the plays to be performed at the Burg. Now Friedrich Halm curtailed this purview and Laube, interpreting this as an act of intentional humiliation, preferred to abdicate (Lothar 119).¹⁰

Laube's resignation was a big disappointment for Marie Ebner, who much appreciated him as artistic director and valued his judgement of her work, although she never quite knew if he believed in her talent. The appointment of Halm as superintendent did not please her at all, because she was afraid that, although he now was in a position to perform Marie Roland at the Burg, he did not have the courage to intercede for her. On July 11, 1867, upon learning of Halm's appointment as superintendent she noted in her diary: "Farewell Marie Roland! -- Another one of my children

has died before it was actually born" (TB I 193). But she swore not to lose heart and to continue the painful struggle for her dramatic career.

Yet the Halm-Laube controversy affected her deeply. She was convinced that her teacher had done Laube a great wrong, although the former professed his innocence and hoped to effect a reconciliation with his opponent (TB I 212). Henceforth she could not respect Halm anymore and her relationship with him soured. After his death in 1871 she wrote in her diary : "I shall never get over the fact that our so amicable relationship had to be clouded during the last few years because of the unfortunate conflict with Laube" (TB II 38).

Marie Roland was Ebner Eschenbach's last historical drama and is still considered her best work for the stage (Rocek 581). After his resignation Heinrich Laube praised it in the Neue Freie Presse as a work of "entirely pure high-mindedness" and blamed the Burg for rejecting it out of "court-theater pre-judice against certain historic periods" (B II 319). Yet other stages refused as well to stage the play, perhaps because of its unconventional conclusion (Necker 27).

In 1869 Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach was asked to write a one-act-play about Friedrich Schiller for the Schiller Memorial Fund. She was very flattered and intrigued by this task, especially since Schiller had been her idol since her childhood years. At first she wanted to call the play Ein Tag aus Schillers Leben (A Day in Schiller's Life) but then changed the title to Doktor Ritter, the pseudonym Schiller had adopted during his stay in Thuringia (TB I 239). The play presents Schiller's stay at Henriette von Wolzogen's estate in Bauernbach. He falls in love with Charlotte, his hostess's daughter who, however, does not reciprocate his feelings for her.

In his passion for the beloved girl Schiller even thinks of renouncing his art but finally realizes that he can never give up his vocation.

Marie Ebner started writing the play on January 7, 1869 and completed it on January 22. During these two weeks she was able to write without interruption. At the same time Sigmund Schlesinger, a journalist who wrote occasional pieces for the theatre, had been asked to contribute a piece for the Schiller Fund. Since he did not complete his play Die Schwestern von Rudolstadt in time, Ebner-Eschenbach's play was accepted by the committee and submitted to the Kärntnertheater and the Burgtheater. Her anonymity was preserved. Only Moritz, her brother Adolf, and his wife Sophie, her brother Viktor and a few very close friends knew that she was the author of the piece.

Both theaters staged Doctor Ritter. After the rehearsal at the Burg Marie wrote in her diary: "I begin to hope and cease to be afraid" (TB I 246). The performance on February 21, 1869 surpassed all her expectations. The actors, encouraged by an audience which became more and more supportive, gave their best and in the end applauded enthusiastically (TB I 246). Two days later Marie Ebner was called to the stage, a fact which must have given her deep satisfaction, since she was finally able to prove her talent to her ever doubting relatives and friends.

Moritz, impressed by her achievement, had sent her Schiller's bust the day she had completed the piece (TB I 241). Adolf and Viktor sent her a bouquet of flowers after the première as a token of their admiration. Her father had enjoyed the performance without knowing that the drama stemmed from the pen of his own daughter. As Franz von Dubsy, Marie Ebner's nephew, recalls:

The play was performed without anyone excepting the few who shared the secret being able to guess that she was the author. It pleased, amongst others, my grand-father, who had participated at the performance, being left in ignorance, as the rest. Returned home he expressed his satisfaction with the piece and added in Aunt Marie's presence: "Here she is always writing, our Marie. If she had accomplished something like this I would not mind her writing!" He was not exactly sentimental, my grandfather. But when Aunt Marie confessed that she had actually written it, he could not hide his joy and embraced her" ("Erinnerungen" 17).

Doctor Ritter was performed five times at the Burgtheater between February and March 1869 and was also staged in Leipzig and Prague later that year. It then disappeared from the repertoire only to be performed again at the occasion of Ebner-Eschenbach's seventieth birthday.

As much as the audience enjoyed the play, the review in the papers in 1869 was again far from flattering. Ludwig Speidel, a very prominent theater critic, revealed the author as "Frau Baronin Ebner, in the literary field known under the war-name of Eschenbach" and continued:

She did well to hide behind the effective name of Schiller, because of her own she could hardly act. What only and alone creates an effect is the well-sounding phrase (of the finest Panama-straw) which is put into Schiller's mouth. And the morale of the story? Nothing more than that Frederic the Great, in answer to the cobbler, who prided himself of knowing him, said: "You fool, I am going into the Seven-Years War" (B I 131).

Was Speidel, "the actual preserver of the Burgtheater tradition" (Lothar 109), a friend of the Duchess Auersperg and did he try to please her with this devastating review, or was he annoyed for some other reason? Frau Gabillon, one of the performers of Dr. Ritter, for reasons best known to herself, had persuaded the committee of the Schiller Memorial Fund not to send free tickets to the editor of the Sonntagszeitung. Marie Ebner therefore expected negative repercussions (TB I 245). The editor of that paper may have thought her behind the scheme and used Speidel to take

revenge.¹¹ Still another reason for the malicious write-up may have been that Sigmund Schlesinger felt offended that Ebner-Eschenbach's work was preferred to his own and that he asked Speidel to write a negative review. In her diary Marie notes that henceforth Schlesinger bore the ladies' committee of the Schiller Fund a grudge. He may have had a grudge against her as well (TB I 243). Marie Ebner was not upset about Speidel's invective -- the success at the premiere had uplifted her -- and therefore she could comment in her diary: "It would be a pity if the man did not allow himself that innocent pleasure" (TB I 248). She was proud of her accomplishment and for once did not take too seriously what the critics had to say. In her reminiscences of Grillparzer she later recalled the performance of Dr. Ritter: "The audience was warm and responded in a friendly way. Critics ridiculed and nagged. I had done everything wrong. Completely different - that would have been the right thing to do" (898). She then went to see her beloved Grillparzer who assured her that he had long wanted to tell her how happy he was about the success of the play. To hear that Grillparzer took an interest in her work compensated her for all the vicious reviews.

Soon afterwards family problems overshadowed Marie Ebner's life so that her literary work had to be set aside. In August Xaverine became seriously ill, having been unwell and suffering from nerve and heart problems for a long time. Her relationship with her husband had deteriorated over the years to such a degree that family members dreaded to visit the couple. In February 1869 she mentioned having been to dinner with her parents who were at odds again. She blamed her father for the

differences between her parents and was very upset about it (TB I 248).

Xaverine died on Sept 4, 1869 leaving the family to look after Count Dubsky and to endure his cantankerous moods. How much this affected Marie is shown by her diary entries, which deal exclusively with her father, and the problems he caused the family during their stay in Zdislawitz, where Xaverine was buried. On September 22 she wrote: "Perhaps the worst day which we lived through since the death of our good mother" (TB I 278). September 23: "A day worse than yesterday. I am very tired, very discouraged". September 24: "Papa is slightly better today and in a softer mood. May God preserve it! The whole day Papa remained good and friendly with us, not a single relapse into the almost hostile way in which he treated us thus far" (TB I 279).

By that time Count Dubsky had demanded that Marie and her husband move back into the "Rabenhaus" with him and take care of his needs. The couple contemplated such a prospect with horror and saw their future in the bleakest colours. Marie went through a terrible crisis. For a long time she felt that she should refuse her father's request, because she did not have the strength to be constantly around him (TB I 277). On September 27 she confided in her diary: "Again a magnificent sunny summer day, if one had a joyful heart to enjoy it. I am looking into the future as into a hopeless void. What good can come out of it? At any rate my existence will be called: joylessness, dependence, deepest loneliness" (TB I 279). Moritz likewise felt that moving into his father-in-law's house and giving up his privacy went beyond his strength. On October 30, 1869 Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach entered in her diary: "The whole day at home.



Marie and Moritz von Ebner-Eschenbach in the 1860s

It was snowing and raining. Moritz quite miserable...; we talk a lot about the sad future, which is before us. No green twig can be seen which would allow us to catch a ray of hope" (TB I 284). Marie was particularly apprehensive because she knew that her husband and her father did not get along. When they were together tempers always ran high and she had to settle their quarrels. Just recently Moritz had left Zdislawitz in a huff because his father-in-law had badly upset him. Yet Marie and Moritz finally realized that it was their duty to care for Count Dubsky and that everyone in the family expected it of them.

On November 4 Marie moved back into her father's house, while Moritz departed for a trip to Egypt. In her diary she noted with resignation. "Packed up. Our last dinner at our own table. We parted with difficulty. A new existence begins. The old one was not always pure happiness, but we were used to it" (TB I 285). Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach suddenly found herself again under the supervision of her autocratic and authoritarian father, who tried to control her life, as he had done in her youth. Moritz avoided the old man as best he could and went on extended trips whenever the opportunity arose. How much Marie chafed under these conditions is revealed by the following diary entry:

Early Dr.Schmidt, later Count Paar. We struggled through to mealtime. In the evening a party of tarock and Adolf's good humour were helpful [...] Thus it would be tolerable -- but how does my inner life look! My soul is crying for my work, for my activities. I believe those who suffer from home sickness feel just like that (TB I 289).

It would take weeks to reorganize her father's sloppily run household. For now at least he had a lady, who came every morning to read the papers to him and to keep him company until lunchtime. She was a great help, yet did not want to accept a permanent position (TB I 291). Then a

housekeeper would have to be found, someone who was efficient and willing to bear Count Dubsky's fluctuating moods.

How would Marie be able to cope with all these new responsibilities and still find time and composure to concentrate on her writing?

CHAPTER 3:

"GOALS SET TOO HIGH"

Since 1867 Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach had thought about a comedy she wanted to call Das Waldfräulein, after Zedlitz' epic poem, from which Moritz had once copied some verses for her. Having had many disappointments with her dramas she hoped to be more successful with another comedy, the genre that was still the most popular at the Burg. In November 1867 she had started her work, but was often prevented from writing because of strong headaches, ear problems and worries about her parents, whose life together was turning more and more into a nightmare. On December 6, 1867 she wrote in her diary:

Very unwell, slept very badly. I may be wrong but according to my feelings I am no better off than any patient. And on top of it that heavy atmosphere in my parents' home! I am supposed to help, dear God! and am beaten sore with a hundred-thousand cudgels. The only solace, the only remedy in order to gain courage would be to be able to work, or even better, to be allowed to work (TB I 216).

She also felt that her dark room, giving on to a gloomy inner courtyard was not conducive to writing a cheerful comedy. In her diary she sighed on November 17:

I got up late and all day long felt sick and very weak. In my gloomy backyard room it is hardly possible to write. That spoils my mood and, I am afraid, will influence my work. Das Waldfräulein should be composed in a room flooded with sunshine, warm and bright it should be therein, and in the heart of the one who writes it (TB I 231).

She regularly read individual acts to friends who all enjoyed them, but she herself was not pleased (TB I 231). Yet, In spite of her own forebodings and Halm's criticism of the play, she did not give up hope that the comedy

would one day be a success on stage. In 1869 she sent the manuscript to various friends, among them Hieronymus Lorm and Betty Paoli, whose judgement she valued and who encouraged her to continue her work.

More than two years later she finally completed the comedy for publication. The manuscript, which is preserved in the Stadtbibliothek in Vienna, shows Ebner-Eschenbach's dedication to this work. Even the last version -- neatly handwritten and bound -- shows crossed out passages and major changes. A whole act is rewritten. She also wrote down suggestions as to which actors should play which parts. In both Zedlitz' and Ebner-Eschenbach's version the heroine is a young, nubile aristocratic girl who has been brought up in the countryside and is transferred to the city to find a suitable husband. Having grown up in the country she feels very close to nature and often is at odds with the conventions and customs practiced in the urban salons. But in spite of her lack of elegance and her interest in learning, an interest that is frowned upon by her peers, she ultimately finds a suitor and, after some comic misunderstandings, gives her hand to the man she loves.

Heinrich Laube enthusiastically accepted the comedy for his newly established stage. After his resignation from the Burg he had first gone to Leipzig, but was soon called back to Vienna to found the Stadttheater, a theatre meant to be a rival for the Burg. The first performance of Das Waldfräulein turned out to be a social event. Rumour preceding the performance had it that the play portrayed and caricatured a number of highly placed personalities and that the name Eschenbach was a pseudonym behind which a well-known Viennese society-lady was hiding. The house

was filling fast. Mounted police tried in vain to bring order into the chaos of carriages and buggies. Archduke Wilhelm, a member of the Imperial family, was present, besides a great number of the aristocratic elite. The suspense in the place was almost unbearable. Due to the audience's lack of response the performers could not give their best, so that the whole production was stiff and left a lot to be desired. Marie Ebner, who watched the performance partly in her brother Adolf's box and later joined the Laubes in theirs, felt utterly mortified, since in the end she heard more hissing than applause (Gladt 45).

The next day critics of various dailies showered their ridicule and malice upon the performance and the author. They found fault with the structure of the comedy, objected to the protagonist's affection for a servant and missed the "clerical element as the most modern of character traits " (Gladt 47). One critic confirmed that he "had seen worse" while another reflected: "Where people laugh like mad, one asks oneself: 'Why did I laugh'? If I think over the several characters and scenes of the Waldfräulein I ask the reverse question: 'Why did I not laugh at this or that?' Then I discover by hindsight that there is real comedy in these figures and scenes" (Gladt 48).

As once before, Ebner-Eschenbach was also maligned for being an aristocrat and the intent of her work was viciously distorted. She was also ridiculed as a woman writer who advocated the "noble guild of learned women." Her protagonist was blamed for behaving like a "boor" with "a bold, even insolent appearance" and for having a penchant for becoming a bluestocking¹² (Gladt 47). The critic further remarked that the species of bluestocking was more common among women of the aristocracy than

among the bourgeoisie because the latter were not bored enough to aspire to a writing career (ibid.). Another, particularly malicious comment, read: "Do these mean little family quarrels in the way in which they are presented here -- detailed as it is the wont of women and repeated from one act to the next -- not give the petty impression of family gossip which is being brought to dramatic publicity?" (B I 89). Yet there were also a few positive reviews which gave the author credit for her brilliant and realistic characterization and for her witty dialogues (Tyrolt 31). Heinrich Laube also commented positively in his history of the Wiener Stadttheater:

The world of nobility which considered us a burgher-theater and visited us only on exceptional occasions, made this evening an exception and came. The play was supposed to be by a peer and that was the reason why one wanted to see it. They came and listened and went away with the words: "This will not last". But it lasted, though not with the power of a leading play, it lasted due to the piquant, intelligently developed theme and the talented dialogue (95/6).

He further stated: "The author's name Eschenbach indeed hides a lady of the world of the aristocracy, who with talent and taste is writing for the stage" (96). Laube obviously had good intentions towards Ebner-Eschenbach and tried to encourage her to write for the theatre but was powerless against the malice of the press. Instead of offering constructive advice with regard to the plays critics always attacked the author. Raw and shaken after being lampooned once again, Marie Ebner remarked in her diary:

Papers of all kinds and trends pour scorn on Das Waldfräulein and its author. The play is certainly quite weak. Who could have seen its weaknesses better than I saw them at the rehearsals and the performance? But it does not deserve the humiliating treatment it received. I also do not know how I have earned the personal malice which is shown to me in all journals without exception. Under the flood of vituperation which rained down on me I hardly dared to go out into the

streets. When a buggy-driver gave me a friendly greeting, I was filled with gratitude (Gladt 48).

If the Duchess Auersperg was behind the critics' viciousness, she certainly had done a thorough job.

Meanwhile, in spite of the corrupt and spiteful press, Das Waldfräulein was performed eleven times, a sign that it drew an audience.¹³ After the seventh performance the actress Katharina Schratt, later mistress of Emperor Franz Joseph, played the part of Sarah and delighted the crowd (Gladt 48). Her personality and popularity ultimately contributed to the popular success of the comedy. Yet the disparaging reviews had hurt Ebner-Eschenbach to the quick. When a manager of her father's country estate wrote her a letter, telling her that he had asked an acquaintance to write a more positive review of her play, she was all the more distressed, especially since this critic ultimately failed to respond to the request. (B I 89). How deeply she suffered at that time may be inferred from her 1875 story "Ein Spätgeborener" into which she admittedly poured her grief and frustration about the critics' panning of her play (Schmidt 305). Like her hero, she realized that the audience was craving for sensationalism and vulgarity and that she could not cater to the modern taste. Like her hero she also knew that she was "born too late" (668). In a letter to Devrient Marie Ebner wrote: "Like my poor hero I should have come fifty years earlier into the world, if I was to achieve in it more than my own maturing, a coping with my self, or, to say it in a few words, resignation which has nothing to do with pessimistic lassitude" (B I 95).

Andreas Muth, the protagonist of this story, is a simple office clerk, who in his free time dedicates himself to writing dramas. His artistic

talent has developed in isolation. Nobody but a very close friend knows about his secret aspirations. All of Muth's dramas, diligently written and regularly submitted to the theatre office, have been turned down. Yet one day the unbelievable happens: his play Marc Aurel is accepted by the stage-director, due to a misunderstanding. Rumour has it that Count Auwald, a well-known controversial statesman, is hiding behind Muth's pseudonym "Karl Stein". The play is performed but does not please and the review, actually geared to insulting Count Auwald, devastates Andreas Muth so that he begins to doubt his talent. He realizes that he has been born too late and that the audience does not appreciate his conception of art any more. Yet he refuses to become a hack writer. Lampooned by a vindictive critic Andreas Muth in his desperation runs for hours through a cold winter night, contracts a severe fever and dies in a delirium.

Like her hapless hero, who was far too sensitive for the harsh reality of the theater and who could not cope with the craftiness of vicious critics, Marie Ebner was too easily affected by negative criticism. When she had written a piece in her youth and someone saw a flaw in it, she destroyed it right away and started another work (KL 276). In 1867, having learned about Otto Ludwig's analysis of her Maria Stuart, she called his comment "cruel criticism" and totally overlooked his compliments (TB 212). Since she knew how much her husband and her relatives objected to her writing professionally, she saw every negative review as a victory for them and as a painful defeat for herself.

Yet unlike Andreas Muth, who never wrote a line again after his tragic experience with theatre critics, Ebner-Eschenbach did not give up. In spite of her disappointment with Das Waldfräulein she submitted another

play, called Untröstlich, to Laube's Wiener Stadttheater.¹⁴ The play dealt with the theme of the widow of Ephesus and was announced as an "Original Comedy by Meier", a new pseudonym she had chosen to hide her aristocratic background and her gender (Gladt 48). Yet despite these precautions the performance on March 16, 1874, was likewise not successful.

Nor did Männertreu, Marie Ebner's second comedy of 1874, succeed on stage. Although she had by now given up her dream of reforming the German stage and becoming "the Shakespeare of the nineteenth century", she continued writing pieces for the stage. She wrote plays to be performed by her relatives on the occasion of special family events, and she wrote for smaller, provincial theatres. After completing a farce for the Bürgsteiner Residenztheater she entered in her diary: "I finished Abgesagt this morning. It is nonsense, but it pleases me that I have been able to get a presentable piece done in five days. And yet I had, at the most, only one hour per day for writing. Therefore, if it had to be, I could earn my living quite well" (TB II 290). Between 1880 and 1903 she wrote several dialogue novellas, some of which were successfully performed. In 1881 she conceived the farce Es wandelt niemand ungestraft unter Palmen. It was first published in Die Dioskuren, and later performed at the Freie Bühne in Berlin (Gladt 25).

The one act play Ohne Liebe, which initially appeared in Westermanns Monatshefte, was also performed on various stages in Berlin and was later accepted at the Burg in Vienna. There it remained in the repertoire for two years and was presented on the occasion of Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach's seventieth birthday. The other one-act plays Ein

Sportsmann, Genesen, Zwei Schwestern, and Am Ende likewise show that until the last years of her life Marie Ebner conceived works with the stage in mind. Yet by the time Das Waldfräulein was lampooned by the press, she had begun to realize that too many obstacles prevented her from achieving her goal on stage.¹⁵

The hectic double life she had to lead also took its toll on her health. She very frequently suffered from severe headaches and often had to take to her bed, especially after she had worked intensely on a stage piece. Apart from having a problem with her right ear, which was gradually going deaf, she also suffered from almost unbearable backpain at the time she was writing Das Waldfräulein (TB I 212). Writing was not only a physical strain on her but also a heavy psychological burden. She trembled before each performance of her plays and often spent sleepless nights because she worried so much about how they would be received by audience and critics. After the big event she apprehensively awaited the reviews and was regularly in despair on account of the malice and spite of the reviewers who did not understand or did not want to understand her message and intent. She gradually realized that she was temperamentally not suited to be a dramatist. Overly sensitive, she not only worried about the fate of her "paper children" but also to a very great extent about the people whom she knew, especially her relatives. When Claudius, a cousin, committed suicide on Christmas Day, ending a long and painful battle with cancer, Marie was devastated and for a long time could not think about her literary work. Shortly afterwards her beloved grandmother Bartenstein died, an event which again undermined Marie's strength for her art.

A particularly upsetting time had been the war of 1866 between Austria and Prussia, the time when she had tried to work on Marie Roland.

The political events had interfered in her private life, especially since Moritz and her two brothers Viktor and Heinrich were involved in the war.

In April 1866 the German Chancellor von Bismarck had introduced a motion to reform the Confederal Diet and suggested the election of the Assembly by general male franchise. Bismarck knew very well that Austria would reject this plan. In the meantime the controversy regarding the administration of the duchies of Schleswig and Holstein continued. When General Gablenz, the Austrian governor of Holstein, summoned the provincial Diet, Bismarck objected, calling this a violation of the Gastein convention of August 14, 1865. Now Prussia not only sent troops into Holstein but also invaded Hanover, Kurhesse and Saxony, all of them Austria's allies, thus starting the war which greatly reduced Austria's power in Europe. Henceforth Austria had to accept Prussia's political leadership, which incorporated the North German Federation into its realm and claimed not only Hanover, Nassau and Frankfort, but also the duchies of Schleswig and Holstein (Kann 276).

In her diary of March 15, 1866, Ebner-Eschenbach had mentioned: "We keep thoughtlessly living our small lives, while in the outside world great events are shaping up. The war with Prussia is sure to come" (TB I 86). On April 10, 1866 she commented: "Prussia is joining with Italy, which is planning war against us, should it break out within the next three months. For this the Italians will get the gift of Venice from the loyal Prussians. Grinding one's teeth is all one can do when hearing that" (TB I 90). On May 2, 1866 she noted: "Worked quite well without really

being in a good mood. The events which are spreading in the world are depressing" (TB I 94).

Apart from worrying about her relatives who were fighting in the war -- her brother Adolf had joined as a volunteer under Archduke Albrecht -- Marie Ebner was also personally inconvenienced and prevented from returning to Zdislawitz. On July 12, 1866 she was visiting her relatives at their Hungarian estate in Bucsan and wrote in her diary:

I can no longer go to Zdislawitz: The enemy is advancing through Weisskirchen towards Kremsier. Today at 4 p.m. we were leaving for Pressburg. We almost missed the train. It took us five hours to get to Pressburg. In Gänserndorf we were told that the Prussians had already arrived in Brünn (TB I 108).

In August Prussian soldiers were quartered in Zdislawitz: "Artillery, infantry, a hundred and seventy men in the village, in the office three officers, twelve men, twenty-two horses" (TB I 113). Shortly afterwards cholera broke out, which again caused Ebner-Eschenbach great worries, because her father caught it, although in a mild form, and her brother Adolf and his wife Sophie were prevented from joining their family at home in Löschna.

All these events in her family and around Zdislawitz affected Marie Ebner deeply and were not conducive to progress in her literary work. Yet she continued to write. On September 28, 1866 she noted in her diary: "In the morning I read and thought about the prologue to Roland; difficult, but could turn out well. In the afternoon a drive; a dear long letter from Marie. Cholera had broken out already in Bucsan and had already claimed some victims before she departed" (TB I 120). Highly

sensitive, Marie Ebner was profoundly affected by the sufferings of those she loved.

Yet she also knew another reason why she had not been successful in the field of drama. She was aware that she had never been able to find her own voice. As much as she had appreciated Friedrich Halm as her mentor, she soon began to object to his dogmatic ways. She also disliked him more and more because of his unfair behaviour towards Laube with whom she deeply sympathized (TB I 208).

After Halm's death in 1871 she turned to his friend Faust Pachler, court librarian and aspiring dramatist, who took great pains to read her manuscripts. But, being himself not particularly talented in the field, his advice was of no great value to Marie. He had written about twenty-five theatre pieces, none of which was ever performed. Once he gave Marie Ebner the manuscript of his drama Begum Somru with the dedication: "The jubilee of this piece, never accepted by any stage, may consist in the enjoyment of the good luck to have come into the hands of a dear friend" (qtd in B II 154). Despite the numerous disappointments with his own stage works he was a very lenient judge of other people's dramatic achievements. Having read Ebner-Eschenbach's play Männertreu in 1874 he wrote:

Bravo! Bravissimo! If your Männertreu makes the same impression on the public which it made on me, you will experience great joy. You have accomplished in it -- almost -- what I always wanted to see: the liberation from Halm, without sacrificing the good points of his method. I am sure the author of one of the best comedies in German literature, Verbot und Befehl would be happy with this work.There is nothing to take exception to, but only to give recognition to, and that I do with a truly happy heart (RV I.N.60687).

While Pachler tried to flatter her and failed to give constructive advice, Heinrich Laube regularly offered suggestions as to how to change her plays. He often felt her pieces were too long, too novelistic and not effective enough on stage. Yet he did not tell her exactly how to improve her work. As much as she respected him as artistic director of the Burg she did not think of him as highly as a dramatist. Once, after Laube had suggested changes in Marie Roland, Ebner-Eschenbach wrote in her diary: "Not all the changes he suggests please me -- I would have liked to leave my piece as it is, with all its mistakes and merits. Thus it would at least be -- my own" (TB I 170). She also did not like Laube's 1868 comedy Böse Zungen, which had been rejected by Halm at the Burg and was then performed with little success at the Theater an der Wien and later in Prague (TB 232). Indeed, Laube's forte was not so much creating but directing plays (Lothar 105). Marie Ebner thus never had a teacher who, besides giving her a solid formal training, could have helped her to develop her own conception of drama and to assert her own artistic ideas.

With all these disadvantages and her powerful enemies in the highest circles, Ebner-Eschenbach could not hope ever to succeed in a career as a dramatist. The more disparaging the reviews in the press became the less did her relatives believe in her talent and the more they urged her to give up an occupation they had always considered an embarrassment for the family. As long as she had studied philosophy and literature and had written plays to be performed at home, her interest in these fields were treated as a whim and as a tolerable hobby. Yet as soon as she insisted that she wanted to be taken seriously as an artist and declared writing

her avowed profession, her relatives began to feel uneasy and blamed her for neglecting her duties towards them. Her husband began to make life very difficult for her.

Angrily she noted how zealously Moritz worked on his war projects, while denying her the satisfaction of achieving her own goals:

I told him today: It is easy for you to work. In your, that is in our family, nobody finds anything wrong with you wanting to deploy sea-mines, while you would like it best to explode my poor theater pieces. That I find incomprehensible: how my people can believe that my interest for my writing would damage my love for them. Dear God! The moment one of them is lacking even the smallest thing, all my thoughts are with him and I have no thoughts anymore for my work (TB I 93).

After the devastating reviews of Das Waldfräulein her relatives were determined to discourage her from following her literary career. On July 5, 1873 she wrote in her diary:

A long, painful conference. Both of my dear, good, loving brothers urge me to give up my writing. For my sake, for the sake of all those who want to see my peace of mind restored. Viktor thinks with good firm will and corresponding strength of soul I should master it. He claims not to be able to comprehend why this appears to me so completely desolate (Vesely 216).

But at that time she was still not ready to give up her long-cherished dream. If Untröstlich and Männertreue had succeeded, Moritz and her relatives would have had to admit that she had talent and that writing was indeed her vocation. But the comedies also failed to capture the audience's interest. Disappointed and dejected, Marie Ebner for a while felt like Andreas Muth of "Ein Spätgeborener", whose "creative urge was gone because the belief in his talent had left him" (663). Like him she may have pondered over her unsuccessful past:

It was a long chain of suppressed emotions, an oppressed cry, a silent resignation, practiced so long that constant self-defeat had even blunted the force of desire. A series of failed hopes, about which no complaint ever crossed his lips. All around him, wherever he looked, the victory of mediocrity, of partisanship, and all his pain, all his outrage compressed in his soul (677).

Marie Ebner was fully aware of the vicious circle in which she found herself. First her "dear ones" hardly left her a minute to herself, so that she had no time to concentrate on her work, and then they distrusted her talent. She also knew that being a woman was a great obstacle to her career. The theatre was a male domain and basically rejected women dramatists. Not only were women faced with many moral restrictions and limitations, but they also were intellectually and emotionally little conditioned for the harsh reality of the theatre world.

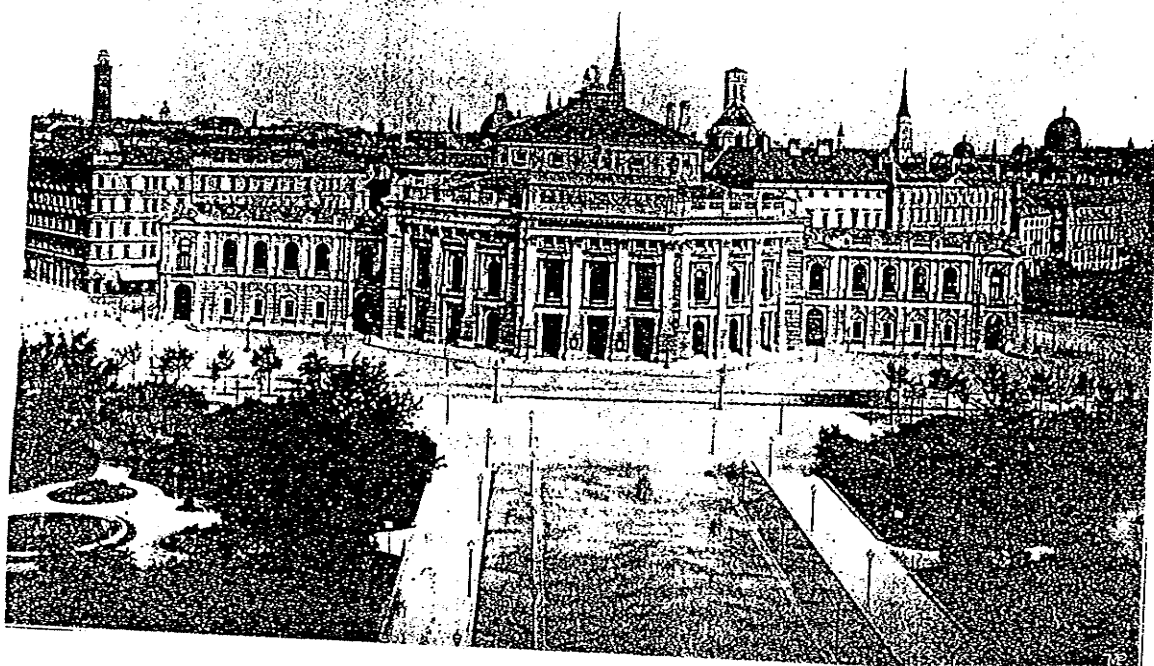
Men, on account of their psycho-physical make-up, their education and worldly experience had all the advantages to succeed in the field.¹⁶

As Marie Ebner has her hero of "Ein Spätgeborener" say:

Yes, you are a man! You have grown up in the real world, you are entitled to carry your head high in the crowd. You have lived, you have fought, you have experienced storms and have been victorious, you have been wounded and you have recovered... I am not strong like you. The strokes which hardly grazed your skin have cost me the blood of my heart (686).

A further obstacle was her aristocratic background. Bourgeois critics vilified her plays and criticized her for not being able to overcome her class prejudices, reviewers in the service of the aristocracy maligned her for soiling the nest. Gradually Marie Ebner also realized that she did not have enough talent to become a prominent dramatist (Schmidt 305).

When, in 1900, Anton Bettelheim wanted to persuade Paul Schlenther, then stage director of the Burg, to perform her comedy Die Egoisten she



The new Burgtheater

discouraged him from persuing this plan (B II 140). She feared that this work, written in 1871 and never accepted by any stage, would not be a success. She also knew that her works Am Ende , Dr Ritter and Ohne Liebe were staged at the Burg only as a tribute on the occasion of her seventieth birthday. In her own view her best dramatic works were Maria Stuart, Marie Roland, and Dr Ritter (Schmidt 305). Thus in 1874 Marie Ebner finally relinquished her dearest wish to become a dramatist. Yet she did not give up writing.

Supported by friends like Louise Neumann, the Weils, Tunklers and Zimmermanns who believed in her talent and thought she was right to devote her free time to her literary interests, she found the strength to go on. She wrote the story "Ein Spätgeborener" and sublimated her personal conflicts through fictional depiction, a remedy that helped her to liberate herself from many complexes and pent-up fears. While her hero had to die in despair over his alleged failure, she would continue to fight for the realization of her talent. As she recalls in "Aus meinen Kinder- und Lehrjahren":

The life-struggle of someone, who seriously and intensely aims at goals set too high, is very difficult indeed. What he would need most for his salvation he achieves last: humility. It takes long before the dreamer, having thought to be able to breathe freely only at the mountain top, builds a little hut at its foot and finds his peace (279).

So far Schiller and the classicist tradition had been the model to which she had subordinated her own conception of art. She had imitated and striven to follow the masters she had most admired. She now realized that she must try to liberate herself in order to find her own voice.¹⁷ Henceforth she would not have to be the mouthpiece of her mentors anymore -- she would be an artist in her own right. Little did she know at that time that

she was not "at the end of her career" as she wrote to Devrient, but that she was entering the path to literary fame.¹⁸

NOTES

1. Some people in Marie Ebner's circles were impressed with her book. Bertha Suttner writes in her memoirs that Ebner-Eschenbach's "star was then beginning to rise" (44) and that her cousin Elvira therefore also consulted her on her literary future. Marie Ebner, like Grillparzer, then came to the young dramatist's home and encouraged her to keep writing (Suttner 44/45).
2. K.H. Roszbacher in his Introduction to Aus Franzensbad also holds this view (128).
3. This view is confirmed by Sylvia Bovenschen in Die imaginierte Weiblichkeit (218/19).
4. Eduard Fuchs in Sozialgeschichte der Frau interprets this cult with actors and actresses as a sign of political powerlessness (434).
5. See J. Winter, who writes in Der Adel about the social obligations of the aristocracy: "The social net is more closely knit than that of a welfare state, unwritten laws are more effective than the most progressive legislation of government" (243).
6. Paul Heyse and Theodor Fontane were members of the "Tunnel an der Spree" (Krausnick 43); Anastasius Grün regularly met with Eduard Bauernfeld, Josef von Hammer and Nikolaus Lenau (Schlosser 38), and Stefan Zweig had his classmates with whom he could discuss art and literature (The World, 39).
7. Necker speculates that this fifth act with its sentimental conclusion may have deterred stage directors from accepting the tragedy (27).
8. Heinrich Laube mentions in his letter of September 1867, in which he states the reasons for his resignation, that Duke Auersperg, shortly after his appointment as Generalintendant, demanded a greater right to interfere in Laube's purviews (Lothar 120). William Johnston points out in The Austrian Mind that the opera and the Burgtheater "suffered constant interference" by the aristocracy and the Imperial family. In 1900 Schnitzler's Der grüne Kakadu was removed from the Burgtheater; officially, because the director had lost his taste for it; yet in reality it was "because an archduchess had objected to its praise of the French Revolution" (43).
9. Karl Kraus, editor of Die Fackel, repeatedly pointed out the corruption of the press (See Bramkamp 55).
10. Laube later claimed that his resignation had been granted because he had staged pieces that attacked some ministers in the government (Lothar 124).

11. Maria Grundner in her dissertation "Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach. Wechselbeziehung zwischen Leben, Werk und Umwelt der Dichterin" claims that Speidel objected to the work because it was written by a woman. She also points out that Speidel may have inspired other colleagues to condemn Ebner-Eschenbach's work (Bramkamp 55). According to Karl Kraus, Speidel never had anything positive to say about any performance at the Burg (Bramkamp 55). See also Saar/ Ebner-Eschenbach correspondence (Kindermann 50).
12. To be called a "bluestocking" was almost a swearword for women. Women who wrote were often maligned with this term, which implied that they neglected their households and their husbands (Fuchs 479/80).
13. Alexander Weilen states in Der Spielplan des neuen Burgtheaters that works performed more than ten times were considered successful (XIX).
14. In 1884 Marie Ebner wrote an essay for the Besucherhefte des Schillertheaters in which she stated that the failure of Das Waldfräulein cured her for ever from the desire to write for the stage (Schmidt 305). Critics therefore assumed for a long time that the above named comedy was her last theater piece. Karl Gladt has been the first to point out that Ebner-Eschenbach wrote pieces for the stage until the beginning of the twentieth century (Waldfräulein 15). She was in the habit of regularly writing comedies for birthday celebrations in her family (B II 164).
15. It is interesting to note that in 1878, in a letter to "die Herren Hohenhausen", Marie Ebner explains her lack of success as a dramatist by referring to the social prejudice against women who face too many "difficulties and obstacles" as dramatists (Schmidt 304). Yet in 1884 in her above mentioned essay she states that she had "insufficient talent" (Schmidt 305).
16. Renate Möhrmann points out in "Die Lesende Vormärzautorin" that boys at high schools had classes in drama and epic writing (319).
17. See Otto Rank who aptly states that young artists "must ultimately, so to say, carve their own individuality out of the collective ideology that prevails and that they themselves have accepted, like the sculptor who carves his figures out of the sawstone" (187).
18. Critics unanimously agree that Ebner-Eschenbach's epic talent surpassed her dramatic skills. Gabriele Reuter in her 1904 monograph on Ebner-Eschenbach observed that the latter did not have the sense of passion needed for dramatic productions and that she also lacked the insight "into the dark and wild beauty of guilt" (28). Johannes Klein points out that Ebner-Eschenbach was very insecure when writing her dramas and states: "The historical themes and persons she dealt with were too far removed from her sphere of experience and she was unable to really identify with them" (I 965). Roman Rocek, although considering Marie Roland "a masterpiece of dramatic literature written by a woman" recognizes the predominantly epic tenor of the work. Karl Gladt reflects on Marie Ebner's inability to put herself into the shoes of an unethical

character and stresses the fact that due to her husband's position and her membership in the aristocracy she was prevented from advocating truly revolutionary ideas. She was further impeded, one might add, by her authoritarian upbringing and the rigidity of the conventions of her milieu. As Gladt rightly points out, Marie Ebner did not have the frivolous attitude needed for the then popular burlesque, but rather confronted the audience with uncomfortable moral demands. "She considered the stage -- like Joseph II -- as a means for social and moral reform. But the Viennese theatergoers did not go to the Burgtheater to be reformed or morally awakened, they wanted to be entertained" (45). Summing up Ebner-Eschenbach's career as a dramatist, Karl Gladt observes: "If one surveys the scope of the dramatic work of Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach, which, over half a century, reaches from the classicist epigonic attempts, Cinq Mars and Maria Stuart, to the last one-act-plays which are close to naturalism, one will have to consider it a great loss for Austrian literature that this line of development did not unfold harmoniously, although it is moot today to speculate whether and how a more welcoming critique and greater appreciation of the public would have affected her dramatic work. There remains the fact that through these failures Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach was more and more pushed into a field in which she achieved something lasting" (26/27).

PART III

STRUGGLING NOVELIST (1874-1883)

If there is a faith
that can move mountains,
it is the faith in one's
own strength.

CHAPTER 1:

"THE FRUITS OF RESIGNATION"

At the end of 1873 Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach's father died, an event that left her with a sense of relief. In her diary she wrote: "Good-bye, my beloved father. You are taking much with you that has filled my life -- sometimes joyfully, sometimes sadly, but always importantly and convincingly" (TB II 176). Four long years she had been at his beck and call, had trembled in apprehension of his regular and unfounded fits of anger and had endured his subsequent spells of self-pity. For the first half year after her stepmother's death she even had to live in her father's apartment and run his household until, after a long and painful search, a housekeeper was found. Count Dubsky was and remained until the end, an extremely difficult man. Marie had taken on her new duty with a heavy heart, knowing that she would have to give up the little privacy she had and devote herself totally to her father's care.

Her diary entries of November and December of 1869 give substantive evidence how hard it was for her to live again in her father's house. He was sullen and quarrelsome and always held the people around him responsible for his depressive moods. Marie Ebner, formerly glad when nobody visited her, now clamoured for guests to entertain her father and to distract him from his moaning and grumbling. To be alone with him was a nightmare, because invariably he would try to pick a fight. Every day she had to take him with her on her round of social calls. If she went out alone she had to report when she would be back, and when she came home

later than originally planned, she had to fear a row. After a visit with friends she once wrote in her diary:

We chatted so long that it was a quarter to twelve, when I remembered that Papa had wanted to send the carriage for me to the theatre. With a beating heart I came home -- for the second time at twelve-thirty. Papa was very good and friendly and did not reproach me at all (TB I 290).

But Count Dubsky was not always that tolerant and sometimes kept his daughter, thirty-nine at the time, in fear and trembling like a child.

His death therefore meant release. Marie Ebner was finally able to live her own life again. Something of how she and the whole family felt at the time may have been recorded in her story "Die Reisegefährten", where the narrator describes the servant and the family of a man, who had tyrannized his whole household:

I met Bohuslava in the hall. Her yellow face was beaming with quiet happiness. I think, if Pan had risen from his grave, she would have embraced him on the condition that he return to his fathers in the greatest hurry. In the salon I found the whole family. They all sat together around the table of the large reception room, not as before, everyone to himself in a different corner. The light of the ceiling lamp, covered with a red silk shade, fell on cheerful, peaceful faces. Everything seemed to call out to me: we are free (Harriman 115).

And about his beloved, who had had to nurse the tyrant and be at his beck and call until his last breath, the narrator says:

You do not know the best human benefits yet, have no idea of the delight of freedom, of self-determination, of the bliss of having responsibility for your actions without any judge other than your own conscience. You will awaken in the morning with a happiness for which you don't know the reason. You lived as if in a grave, now the stone is raised. The cellar vault where you, a living corpse, vegetated, has been opened (Harriman 114).

Yet although physically released from her father, psychologically Marie remained tied to him. His nagging, fear-inspiring presence loomed over

her for many years to come. The reasons for her fear of him had changed, yet the anxiety as such had remained. In her childhood dreams she had created a loving father to compensate for the harshness of reality. Now, as she started to write her prose works, she portrayed him as the despot he really had been. No longer did she have to repress her uneasiness and pain about her father's behaviour, but could bring it into the open in fictionalized form.¹

Marie Ebner may up to then have considered prose writing inferior to creating dramas², but she soon became aware that it meant therapy that helped her to come to terms with her conflicts and fears. By living and identifying with her literary figures -- closely drawn after people she knew -- she could explore their psyches, and by trying to understand their feelings and reasonings she could analyze her own. She realized with a sudden flash of insight that in order to cope with her situation in the present she had to come to terms with the problems of the past. Like one of her heroes she may have felt that "from a past which I thought buried, a ghost's hand reaches into the present and appropriates one piece of my consciousness after the other" ("Chlodwig" 67).

Once she had finished "Ein Spätgeborener", the story into which she had poured all her grief about not having made headway as a dramatist, she resumed work on "Ein Edelmann". She had started this story in 1869, the year when her brother Adolph had been elected to the board of the Union Bank of Vienna³. Like her relatives she was deeply concerned about Adolph's involvement in the business world. In her view the life-style of an aristocrat and that of an industrialist were irreconcilable. She therefore had her protagonist, a former count, who had relinquished his title, warn

his son:

As Count Tannberg, do not be an industrialist; do not call yourself Count Tannberg if you are an industrialist. The one excludes the other. The honorable businessman pursues material values, the nobleman -- according to the meaning of the word -- ideal values. The moment the latter forgets, that he owes to them and to them alone his power, he has given up on himself as a nobleman (DS 64).

As she worked on this story, the theme of the threatening, oppressive father surfaced again. She then described her protagonist's father as a stern, unyielding autocrat, who disinherits his son, because he wants to marry a girl of inferior social status. Since Adolph's unconventional choice of a profession had inspired the story, it is well possible that Marie Ebner also thought of Adolph's problems with his father regarding his inheritance. On December 7, 1866 she had entered in her diary: "Later Adolf came, he has returned from Brünn where he has been on account of the arrangement regarding the property. Unfortunately the matter won't be settled, Papa makes demands, which Adolf cannot fulfil" (TB I 130). Instead of bequeathing his estate Löschna to his oldest son, Count Dubsky insisted that he buy it and the rift between father and son began. Then, suddenly later in 1866, Count Dubsky decided to give all his children their inheritance, yet in the last minute he changed his mind, causing a lot of uneasiness among the family members (TB I 130).

Marie Ebner's next story was "Die Grossmutter". She wrote it in August 1874 in the peace and quiet of the Swiss holiday resort Seelisberg, where she spent her vacation with Ida von Fleischl-Marxow. This time she used a friend's account and transformed it into a piece of art. Dr. Ernst Fleischl was assistant at the Anatomical Institute in Vienna. He told Marie Ebner about a poor old woman, whose grandson had drowned and who had

come to inspect the corpse. Instead of crying and lamenting over the loss of the boy she only seemed concerned about his clothes, which she wanted to sell. While the doctor could not understand such callousness, Marie Ebner saw deeper. With keen psychological insight she portrayed the old woman's quiet greatness and the stoicism with which she faced her life.

There she sat, a picture of sorrow, of poverty and need. Yet not of such need that submits to misery, but of a need that valiantly battles it, that looks it into the eye and defeats it, that does not enervate itself by self-pity and is not cowed down by the care about the future (Paetel, 1920, 160).

Ebner-Eschenbach had met many a woman in her childhood who bore her fate with admirable dignity and quiet determination. With this story she also was able in a way to pay tribute to her grandmother Vockel, whom people had mistakenly considered indifferent and cold.

That same month Ebner started a new story, entitled "Die erste Beichte". She finished it in eleven days, but revised it a few times until in March of 1875 she was ready to send it in for publication. This story was admittedly autobiographical. Ebner now regressed further into the past and tried to come to terms with her own relationship with her father in her childhood. The work became her personal catharsis : for the first time she could openly say what she had gone through on account of her father's rigid authoritarianism. Because he had insisted that she make her First Confession as an immature child she almost committed suicide. It is doubtful whether Count Dubsky ever learned of his daughter's attempt to take her own life, since the people around him were far too afraid of him to bring such an incident to his attention. He certainly would have as severely arraigned the priest, as the count does in the story: "'That is madness ! What did you suggest to the child?' His powerful voice rolled

like thunder in the small room. 'Wherewith did you inflame her head and create this confusion of concepts? ... It is your fault..'" (483).

Yet Marie Ebner wanted her story to end happily and thus, as formerly in her childish fantasies, in the end she portrayed a loving father who showers his little daughter with an affection she may never have experienced in real life:

Mightily and suddenly he was overcome and shaken in the depth of his powerful frame by the consciousness of the past danger and the great love for the child he had never really tried to understand. He ran to the window, lifted his little girl up and pressed her to his heart with overflowing tenderness (485).

"Chlodwig", Ebner's last story begun in 1874, again dealt with the theme of the autocratic, uncomprehending father, this time a father who ruins his daughter's and her prospective suitor's happiness. Chlodwig, the eponymous protagonist, had a very unhappy childhood: "It was a cursed thing, my life. That father!... And this poor, crushed mother, who did not dare to take my side and, much less, to show me affection" (Paetel, 1920, 70). Now he falls in love with a girl beyond his station, whose father likewise thinks only of increasing his own status and totally controls her life. He has already made two of his daughters desperately unhappy by marrying them off to highly-placed but uncongenial suitors. Now he is also about to force his youngest daughter, Hedwig, into a marriage with an unloved man: "Because I love my children I demand obedience and I know if necessary, how to force them to obey me, when their happiness is at stake" (ibid. 102). Hedwig indeed obeys her despotic father and marries the man of his choice, causing Chlodwig, who deeply loves her and thus loses her forever, to become insane.

Looking at "Chlodwig" and the previously written stories, Marie

Ebner realized what "a chain of dismal impressions" (TB II 303) they projected. Yet they had helped her to come to terms with her rejection as a dramatist and with her sorrow over her father's character. As she resigned herself to becoming a writer of prose she also gradually began to see the man who had made life miserable for herself and for his family with greater leniency. But henceforth the motif of the wrathful, unbalanced, despotic husband and father would be an integral part of her work.

In February 1875 Marie sent her stories to her sister Julie, Duchess von Waldburg-Wurzach, asking her help to get them published. Julie was in a sense a kindred spirit. She had inherited her mother's musical talent, she sang and composed, yet had never received any formal training. Marie Ebner regularly visited her and her husband at castle Reichenburg and always fondly remembered their family, consisting now of six "angelic" girls (TB I 173). During one of her visits at Wurzbach she noted in her diary that, should she intend to stay longer, she would be given time to write, because Julie had respect for her work (TB II 277).

Eager to help her sister find recognition, Julie wrote to Baron Reischach at the publishing house Cotta, asking him to try to publish her sister's five stories. He replied: "If your sister's novel is found even remotely suitable for the Cotta publishing house, you may rest assured that it will begin its journey into the world under the protection of the Cotta firm (B II 158/9). It was, on balance, a clever move to have Julie write, because she was socially superior to Baron Reischach. Titles were important in those days. They were used to climb up the social ladder and to manipulate influence. On February 19, 1875 Marie von Ebner received a

telegram from Julie with the message: "Baron Reischach has accepted your manuscript -- overjoyed" (B II 159). On February 21, Ebner-Eschenbach learned from Cotta that 1025 copies of her Erzählungen were going to be printed and that she would receive 400 Mark honorarium and 25 free copies. Marie was in raptures. For the first time in her life she had the satisfaction of real accomplishment. And instead of malicious, disparaging reviews she now received admiration and praise. Heinrich Laube warmly commended her for her story "Ein Spätgeborener" which he had read "with the best impressions, at the end with great emotion" (RV I.N. 56145) and Josef Weilen, her friend and former teacher from Klosterbruck, wrote to her: "I must tell you that the story "Ein Spätgeborener" has gripped me in the depth of my soul. That is not imagination, that is life; drops of blood lie between the lines" (B II 149).

Ferdinand von Saar, who had read "Ein Spätgeborener" before it was published, was likewise deeply impressed. He was one of the first of Marie Ebner's friends to appreciate the "incomparable, epic kind of representation which from now on would characterize all of Ebner-Eschenbach's creations in a special way" (Saar 504). He also praised "Chlodwig" and "Die erste Beichte", pieces which both had "overwhelmed him". In a letter to Marie Ebner he wrote enthusiastically :

What originality, what power of characterization, what purity and precision of form. You have manifested in these works a remarkable progress and I am convinced that now you have found the way to express with ease and confidence all the deep, noble and great values within you (Kindermann 40).

And in conclusion he predicted: "You can be proud of your book! It breathes the spirit of honesty and will force the critics to be honest" (ibid.).



Ferdinand von Saar.

Ferdinand von Saar was Ebner-Eschenbach's junior by three years. He was born in Vienna and had spent his childhood not far from the Drei-Raben-Haus, where she had grown up. His father had died early, leaving the family in straightened circumstances. Saar therefore joined the military, but never became a dedicated soldier. His passion was the theatre and writing for the stage. In 1859, having served for eleven years, he decided to leave the army in order to devote his time to writing drama, his presumed true vocation. Yet he gradually had to realize that his stage work did not gain him the desired fame. He then turned to writing poetry and novellas. His Novellen aus Österreich and the Wiener Elegien finally brought him recognition. Constantly hard up financially he had to rely on the support of well-meaning friends, who invited him as a house-guest to their castles and provided him with an environment where he could write (Bettelheim 91).

Marie Ebner mentioned in her diary of February 15, 1867 that she had heard about Ferdinand von Saar, by now quite well known in Viennese literary circles, and that she had learned about his precarious pecuniary situation:

In the evening at Jetty's. There I heard from Weil that Saar is a former officer. His yearly income is 300 guilders. For his work he did not receive anything from the bookseller. Because of a debt of 100 guiders he had to go to jail just recently. The man must and must be helped (TB I 159).

On March 2, 1867 she finally met Saar personally and noted the following impressions:

A genuine full-blooded Austrian Infantry officer according to his exterior. His figure is stocky, his features are manly, his character perhaps not. He has beautiful, blue, tender poets' eyes. Speech does not flow freely from his mouth; he speaks heavily and slowly (TB I 161).

Marie Ebner instantly liked him. She had always admired his work, but now she became his close friend and did her best to help him. Ebner-Eschenbach collected money for him from acquaintances and managed to get him a stipend from the "Schillerstiftung" (TB I 161/163). Saar, likewise taken by his new friend, visited her regularly "for a cup of coffee and a good cigar" (Kindermann 64) and always enjoyed discussing the latest in arts and theatre with her. He also read his dramas and poems to her. When they could not see each other the two friends corresponded faithfully, exchanging their thoughts about their own accomplishments, about personal problems, and about the current state of affairs.

The former officer and Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach, wife of a general, deeply understood each other as human beings and as artists who had both vainly aspired to become great dramatists.

Saar was often quite critical of Ebner-Eschenbach's works and did not hold back when he disagreed with her literary technique. In March 1874 he returned her manuscript of Untröstlich with the comment that he thoroughly disliked it because she had used a "rough brush and opaque watercolours" (TB II 254). In 1883 he told her that he was not happy with her composition of "Der Kreisphysikus", on account of the fact that she had not focussed enough on the the central figure of the novella (Kindermann 66). He was, however, delighted with the story "Krambambuli". The "Novelle in Correspondenzkarten" appeared to him "too naive in its execution". Yet, in conclusion he stated in his letter: "All in all a valuable book, which, in spite of some weaknessses and deficiencies, gives testimony to the ever progressing and ample development of your poetic and literary genius" (Kindermann 67).

Marie Ebner although finding it difficult to accept criticism graciously replied: " I thank you from the bottom of my heart for your splendid letter, submit to your criticism, enjoy your praise. You give me the best we can get from those who understand us: sincerity" (Kindermann 47). She liked Saar's own work immensely and also strongly believed in his dramatic talent. In her diary she once called him "the greatest talent among all our younger dramatists. A man who only has to find the right matter in order to create something beautiful and lasting for the theater" (TB I 223).

In gratitude for Marie Ebner's friendship and moral encouragement Saar dedicated "Die Geigerin" to her, a novella she considered as one of his most moving. Saar sometimes complained that she did not talk about her works to him as openly as he discussed his oeuvre with her. She therefore once apologized: "Unspeakably hurried -- a nursemaid -- a commisionar -- everything but a writer -- please be indulgent" (Kindermann 79).

What united Ebner-Eschenbach and Saar, apart from discussing their own literary achievements, was also their common dislike of critics and the press. After the publication of Ebner-Eschenbach's Bozena Saar complained:

I wished that a major paper took an interest in us; otherwise we can, all in all, read our books for ourselves. Sooner a camel will go through a needle's eye than that a Speidel or 'such-a-one' would write something about an author who is honestly struggling (Kindermann 50).

Always concerned about Saar's precarious financial situation Marie Ebner was constantly on the look-out for a possibility of providing some income for her friend. In 1885 Franz Lipperheide, the editor of a woman's journal

in Berlin requested a biographical sketch of her. She instantly suggested Saar. Although reluctant to comply, Saar finally wrote the essay, but had to admit how difficult it was for him to give a "striking and exhaustive description of a writer and his works" (Kindermann 74). He was, however, grateful for the "decent honorarium" (Kindermann 75). Thus Ferdinand von Saar became Marie Ebner's first biographer and wrote an essay which immensely pleased her.

You have done an excellent job and surpassed my wildest hopes a thousand times. There is not the slightest word I would have changed. You are doing me great honour, dear friend, and it would be vulgar hypocrisy if I denied that I am extremely happy about it (Kindermann 74).

To honour Marie Ebner on her seventieth birthday Ferdinand von Saar wrote an essay in Die Gartenlaube about his first meeting with the writer, who was later to become his confidante. He had been cordially received by Baron Ebner-Eschenbach and

soon afterwards his wife came in. In her late thirties she had a very attractive appearance. Not tall, but slim and of delicate build: hands and feet of the finest proportion. Her face was not beautiful but charming and very expressive; her mighty brow was framed by thick brown hair. From her somewhat deeply set grey-blue eyes came a glance of infinite goodness, which also revealed itself in the soft and pleasant sound of her voice, when the lady expressed her welcome to us [...].

The baroness had given me, with a certain shy warmth of heart, some words of acknowledgement which led to a general conversation about literature and art. Profound understanding, amazing knowledge was manifest in the statements and observations of the baroness; her husband too, who, as I learned later, was a connoisseur of music, showed himself very knowledgeable. Zimmermann wanted to direct the talk towards the poetic creations of the hostess. She, however, slightly blushing, pushed every further discussion of the subject aside... It had become late and the guests had to think of taking leave. When we had reached the street Zimmermann said: "Now, was I not right? Is she not quite an extraordinary woman?" "Certainly," I said. "Never have I seen so much intelligence combined with such a deep, genuinely womanly character" (504).

Saar also wrote a prologue for Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach's seventieth birthday celebrations at the Burgtheater, but could not recite it personally, because of illness. In gratitude for his eulogy, which Ebner considered "far too beautiful", she sent him a bottle of wine from Moravia, accompanied by a poem expressing her deep-felt joy.

In later years, when Saar was ill, she often sent him food and tried to cheer him up with exuberant letters. While personally rather pessimistic, as can be seen from her diaries, she made a special effort to be cheerful, because she knew how much Saar depended on her encouragement. Once, having received a rather dispirited letter from him, she replied:

Not to see each other again ? There you are wrong, dear, good old Saar. Spring will come and we shall both feel better, and one of these days you will write to me: this afternoon I expect you and I shall rush to your home and we shall have a cosy little chat (Kindermann 149).

Another time she comforted him by stressing his literary success in Austria:

Look, dearest, best friend, we have both gone through difficult hours and days, none of us enjoys perfect health, but we can tell ourselves: we did not live in vain. Quite a few of our ardent desires have found fulfilment. Our Austria does not have to be ashamed of us, and she knows it well, one can say, better with each year. With a pleasure I cannot describe, I see, as it happens frequently now, that your name is being mentioned with due honour in journals and in histories of literature and I hear people who understand something of art praise you (RV I.N. 55471).

Earlier she had sent Saar a pencil because he had mentioned in a letter that, due to an eczema, he could no longer write with ink. In her accompanying letter she wrote: "If our Austrian poet writes with a pencil he must have one of Austrian origin. The enclosed requests to be

graciously accepted" (Kindermann 135). As Saar's cancer advanced and he could not leave his home any more he found solace in writing to Marie Ebner. He confided to her his horror of having to hire a new housekeeper when the former one, to whose services he had been used for decades, had to leave because of old age. From his letters to Ebner-Eschenbach we know that it was not only his terminal illness but also his fear of having to let a stranger into his home, that led to Saar's suicide in 1906 (Kindermann 157).

Shortly before his death Saar sent Marie Ebner his photograph signed "A poet's greetings" and she probably understood it as his farewell. After his death she wrote into her notebook:

Saar dead. The last fellow-fighter. How long did it take us to grow to our modest hill-size height. We both dreamed of reaching fame as dramatic playwrights, he with much more justification than I. Then we achieved success with a first novel, he with "Innocens", I with the "Spätgeborenen". He progressed, step by step, and finally his art culminated in a volume of lyrical poetry and mine in a volume of aphorisms (B II 278/9).

It had, however, taken many years before Marie Ebner's aphorisms, each "the ring of a long chain of thoughts" (Reclam 3) found recognition⁴. In 1857, at twenty-seven, she had begun to write down short maxims expressing her insights on life⁵. It was a valuable exercise for writing in a precise and succinct manner. She had come to the conclusion that "Love is the only positive entity that doubles when being shared" and firmly believed : "If there is a faith that can move mountains it is the faith in one's own power" (B II 35/36).

In 1875 she published her first collection of aphorisms in the Jahrbuch des österreichischen Beamtenvereins and simply signed "M.E." (B II 322). In 1877/78 a small selection was published in the journal Die

Dioskuren. One of the maxims said prophetically: "Only what is too good for the present is good for the future" (B II 202). In 1879 Ebner privately published three hundred of her aphorisms through Ebhardt in Berlin. The production was beautiful -- too expensive in Marie von Ebner's eyes -- but it gradually caught on and slowly found a readership. It is impossible to date most of the aphorisms exactly, but collectively they reveal some of the stages of development through which Ebner-Eschenbach had gone. Many are born out of frustration and disappointment and, far from reflecting her much publicised "sunlike soul" (B II 202), they exhibit biting sarcasm and bitter irony⁶.

Many of Ebner-Eschenbach's colleagues were deeply impressed by her aphorisms. Fanny Lewald considered them superior to the famous maxims of Laroche-foucauld (B II 9). Louise von François termed them in a letter to the critic Erich Schmidt as coming from "a child's heart under a man's skull" (B II 9) and the critic Moritz Necker recognized in them "the striving of a human soul to reach harmony with herself" (Neue Freie Presse 1895). Anton Bettelheim's rather eulogistic appraisal stated:

Wit and wisdom of her thoroughly independent thoughts about the course of the world are rooted in her unconditional truthfulness, and all the rainbow colours in which she displays her moods lead to the one pure source of light of her "sunlike soul" (B II 202)⁷.

Marie von Ebner's aphorisms express her ethics and her aesthetic views and were partly born out of her loneliness and suffering in an aristocratic milieu, which did not understand and appreciate her work. Many of these maxims also reflect her personal experiences among her family and her social circle. Her saying "Patience with the aggressiveness of the simple-minded! It is not easy to understand, that someone does not understand"

(Reclam 4) reminds one of her diary entry of July 18, 1869 where she vowed not to quarrel any more with her relatives about politics, and where she reminded herself to be patient with people of lesser intelligence.

To be lenient with error, to be patient with limitation, that I cannot do. To one who errs and is limited, what I consider truth and wisdom, is again only error and limitation. He believes to be defending the good cause against me, and he is lacking the power to examine the nature of his own belief (TB I 269).

The aphorism "Nothing else can make the coming of some people bearable, but the hope of their departing"(Reclam 16) expresses the frustration Marie Ebner regularly experienced, when beleaguered by relatives and so-called friends. She found their meaningless gossip unbearable at times and vented her feelings in her diary. Her diary entries abound with laments about being interrupted in her writing by visitors. On March 4, 1866 she wrote: "I could have achieved a lot, had Leo not interrupted me. Day for day the same comedy" (TB I 85). And a few weeks later she sighed: "Sefine and I were just busy polishing up our poems when Leo appeared with her unbearable Bello, who spoiled my whole lunch with his intrusive voracity" (TB 88). On March 19, 1867 she complained: "Oh, if I could only stay with my work and were not constantly interrupted" (TB 164). The saying "The sensation of loneliness is painful if it hits us in the midst of a crowd, unbearable if it overcomes us in the midst of our family" (Reclam 56) reminds one of the following entry: "It pains me that I am outgrowing the circle of my relations. If I cannot make myself understood to those who show me such good will to understand me, the fault must be mine" (TB 269). And also:

Did I move ahead, have my dear ones -- regressed, or is perhaps the opposite the case? We no longer find anything really in common. As soon as the conversation reaches some

kind of depth and leaves the most shallow ranges of superficiality, abysses of misunderstandings open up (TB I 269/70).

The aphorism "Do not call yourself poor because your dreams did not come true, he alone is truly poor who has never dreamed at all" (Reclam 45) may have been born out of Ebner-Eschenbach's sad experience with the stage in the sixties and early seventies. Likewise sayings such as "Get up after each fall from the heights! Either the fall will kill you or you grow wings!" (Reclam 47) or "A proudly born defeat is also a victory" (Reclam 51) and "Nobody writes like a god, who has not suffered like a dog" (Reclam 51) reflect her own determination not to admit defeat. Her later experiences with the reading public may be reflected in the sayings: "For the great public a book is not easily too bad but very easily too good" (Reclam 53) or "The wives of mediocre artists are the most merciless judges of others' artistic achievements" (Reclam 33).

After the first edition of her aphorisms, that did not sell well, Marie still continued writing a hundred more, which she published in 1884. By 1888 she had written six hundred maxims, which had become so popular that they appeared in a sixth edition. In 1889 she mentioned in her diary that a simple peasant had taken such a liking to her short statements that he took them along to his work in the fields (Vesely 226).

Yet not all of her readers were aware of how much talent and time it took to write these maxims. In "Aus einem zeitlosen Tagebuche" Marie Ebner recounts the following anecdote about a woman, who obviously underestimated the achievement.

I was no longer young any more, I had learned, read, suffered, reflected, before I surveyed my manuscripts, made a selection of three-hundred aphorisms and published them. The first judgement about my booklet I received from a

twenty-year old fellow tenant: "O, Frau Ebner", she said, "if I sat down -- in an hour I could put such a book together". She was truly convinced that it took nothing but the ability to sit still (726).

Fortunately Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach found other readers and critics who thought more highly of her talent and accomplishment.

At the time of the first publication of her Erzählungen and Aphorismen Marie Ebner, by now approaching fifty, felt rather desperate about the sluggish sale of her books. In an age that did not have the professional advertising machinery that we have it now, it took time for a new author to become known. Even now, with advertising blitzes and promotions, instant recognition of a serious writer is rare. Ebner-Eschenbach's topics were neither sensational nor avant-garde and therefore did not instantly draw a large readership. She also had made the mistake of criticizing and satirizing the critics in "Ein Spätgeborener", the story which opened her first collection of Erzählungen. By the time Saar pointed this mistake out to her it was already too late, the book had been published (Kindermann 41).

When Marie Ebner embarked on her career as a novelist she also had to compete with a number of highly acclaimed Austrian writers like Robert Hamerling, Ludwig Anzengruber, Karl Emil Franzos and Peter Rosegger (Necker 47). She not only had to battle with the public's and critics' prejudice against aristocrats who were seen as dilettants and as antagonists to higher learning and serious art. She also was a woman and therefore had to fight all the harder to be taken seriously in the male dominated field of serious literature⁸. The world of writing and publishing was dominated by men, against whom women writers had to compete and with whom they had to compromise in order to get recognition (Bramkamp

79).

But Marie Ebner, from childhood on used to moving in the male sphere⁹, was ready for the battle. She was determined to make headway as a novelist and willing to confront her male colleagues. Would they ever accept her into their ranks?

CHAPTER 2:

"DISAPPOINTMENT AFTER DISAPPOINTMENT"

In July 1875 Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach visited her sister Friederike at her Bohemian castle Trpist, where she started her story Bozena, another work, in which she tried to come to terms with her past. On the one hand, she wanted to create a work of art, yet on the other there was her urge to deal with her repressed emotions and to resolve the conflicts that went along with them.¹⁰ She still had to verbalize her unhappiness in her family, caused by her father's remarriage and his authoritarian ways. At first she wanted to call her novel "Das weisse Haus" (The white House), presumably as a camouflage for the name of her parental home, the "Drei-Raben-Haus" (Three-Raven-House), which denotes the colour black. Later, on the advice of her friends Ida Fleischl and Josephine Knorr, she settled for the title "Bozena" (Binneberg 105).

The story is set in Western Moravia, then part of the Austrian Empire, during the period of 1830 to 1860. Geographically in the backwaters of world-politics, the life of the protagonists is nevertheless touched by major events transforming Europe at this time: the beginning of the Industrial Revolution with its impact on the fortunes of the traditional upper class, the Revolution of 1848 which mobilized the lower classes in an effort to deprive hereditary nobility of its influence and property, and the unrest of the multi-national Hapsburg Empire, which finally disintegrated in World War I.

The focus is on two families: the Heissensteins, a bourgeois family, and the Rondspergs, members of the Austrian hereditary aristocracy.

Bozena, the eponymous heroine, is a trusted servant of the Heissensteins, and plays a key role in linking the two families together. Leopold Heissenstein is a wealthy wine-merchant and a respected citizen of Weinberg, a provincial town.¹¹ His greatest hope and pride lies in his young son, destined to become his successor and heir. Things begin to go wrong when the boy dies at a boarding school in Vienna, where his father had placed him. Heissenstein sees the purpose of his life's work destroyed. Shortly afterwards his wife, not much thought of during her life, dies, leaving him with his young daughter, Rosa. In his hope to procure a male heir to his family-business, Heissenstein marries Nanette, a former governess, who, instead of stabilizing the family, antagonizes the maid and causes a rift with her stepdaughter.

After Nanette, to her husband's profoundest disappointment, has given birth to a daughter, her whole endeavour is geared towards securing for her own child, Regula, the position of her father's favourite and heir. Rosa, leading a marginal existence in the family and being denied permission to marry a lieutenant in the Austrian Army, elopes with him. Bozena, instead of guarding her ward, has spent the night with an unworthy lover and now tries to atone for her guilt by following Rosa and by supporting the young couple emotionally and financially. She stays with them as their servant in Vienna and later in Hungary. Things do not go well for Rosa. She gives birth to a daughter, then to a son, who lives only for a few days. Shortly afterwards she dies of exhaustion. Her husband falls in an army-action in Hungary. Rosa had tried to re-establish connections with her father, who had disinherited her in his rage over her elopement, but Nanette, the wicked stepmother intercepted the letter which

might have changed Heissenstein's mind.

Bozena takes care of Röschen, Rosa's little daughter, and returns to the Heissenstein house in the hope that the old man will provide for his grandchild. The maid arrives shortly before her master's death. He has repented his harshness towards his daughter Rosa, but by now he is too ill and too much under the control of his wife to make legal provisions for Röschen. After her parents' death Regula becomes sole heiress to the family fortune and the firm is dissolved according to the father's wish, due to lack of a male heir. The husband whom Leopold Heissenstein had had in mind, first for Rosa, and later for his second daughter, has fled because of Regula's unattractiveness.

Regula, now very wealthy, has a host of admirers who would like to marry her for her money. Yet she has an eye on Ronald Rondsperg, the only son of the aristocratic family, in whose house her mother had been governess. The Rondspergs, lacking business acumen, have come close to bankruptcy. Regula has been approached to buy their estate and she expects Ronald to marry her. Thus her mother's fondest dreams would be fulfilled. Instead, Ronald falls in love with Röschen, who is penniless.

In the most dramatic move of the story, Bozena saves the situation by threatening to disclose her well-kept secret, that Regula's mother was a legacy hunter. Under pressure Regula yields to Bozena's demand and gives her niece, Röschen, the newly acquired Rondsberg estate as a dowry for her wedding. The story ends with two blissfully married couples. Regula consents to become the wife of Ludwig Bauer, a high-school teacher and long-time admirer, and Röschen can stay in Rondsberg at the side of the man she loves. Bozena will have the privilege of taking care of the

next generation of Rondsbergs.

Writing this story, made Marie Ebner confront and articulate her inner self again and re-experience emotionally what she had endured in the past. Rosa, Leopold Heissenstein's unhappy daughter, became a vehicle for her to air her own grievances about her isolation and marginality in her family and about her less than satisfactory relationship with her stepmother. As the narrator states: "What a hiatus there was between him and her, how alone she was in the midst of her family, how lonely in her father's house" (111).

Ebner-Eschenbach further used her fictional work to deal again with her hurt over her despotic, obstinate father, who never even tried to understand her. At one point Rosa implores her father and enunciates views that must have been close to Marie Ebner's own: "Please, think like a father now -- forgive me -- think that if I have done injustice to you it was half your own fault. Forgive me father and let me go. You know, I have been a headstrong creature all my life" (113). By ridiculing Regula, Heissenstein's second daughter, who "grew in ugliness and wealth" (88) and who was endowed with a great thirst for knowledge, Marie Ebner could express her own associations with the term bluestocking.¹²

The description of the two patriarchal, fear inspiring fathers, Leopold Heissenstein and the old Count Rondsberg, gave her the opportunity to characterize her own father again. Heissenstein is "the hard, rough master -- the relentless lord, before whom they all tremble, whom they all call merciless, who punishes the tiniest inadvertence like an unforgiveable mistake " (118). His wife, trained in subservience, lives like a shadow in his house.

He was not used to taking the feelings of others into consideration, at least not the ones of his quiet companion through life. What he did was well done and the impression it produced in others left him indifferent. Calmly and self-assuredly he went through life, without fear or regret (76).¹³

Count Rondsperg represents some other aspects of Count Dubsky: his arrogance, impatience and penchant for ridiculing his family members. He challenges his son by mocking him in front of his guests and is ready at any time to pick a fight. His wife has moped away her life at his side: "She thought, how in the end she had been able to endure everything, since he had always trusted in her love, although he himself had often been unloving and unkind" (234).

In her letter of 13 October 1876, Marie Ebner admitted to Hieronymus Lorm that she had drawn Count and Countess Rondsperg and their son, their servants and the hunter Bernhard exactly after people in her environment. The other figures, she stated, had "only traits" of personages she personally knew (BF 68). Yet about her eponymous heroine she said: "Bozena has lived only in my soul" (BF 68). With this heroine she wanted to portray a woman "so honest and truthful" that she would be able to bring about the solution to the conflict (ibid.).

By conceiving the tall, strong and honest maid, Marie Ebner, consciously or subconsciously, created a counterforce to the image of the despotic, patriarchal father, who had haunted her for years. Bozena, the matriarch, is equal to Heissenstein in her wrath and in her strength: "Straight and with her head thrown back, the arms akimbo, she stood there like a rock. She challenged her master with her gaze. His solid figure looked almost puny beside her giant frame" (84). She is morally and ethically infinitely superior to her master and also financially

independent, since she has saved enough money to leave his service when she sees fit (84).

Yet her real strength is service, nurture and protection. She endures humiliation, is able to forgive and is willing to make good whatever she may have failed. While Heissenstein, stubborn and imbued with the patriarchal notion of male superiority brings about his family's and his firm's decline, Bozena restores a shattered family and enhances life for all involved. Love and altruism is her motivating force. It gives her the courage to assert herself and to fight for her convictions. At the end of the story she stands

surrounded by a wonderful, calm and proud majesty; her towering figure still seemed to grow, her whole being breathed power and her voice sounded like metal when she said: "I cannot prove it, but I shall tell the truth and people will believe me" (245).

And she successfully accomplishes what she has set out to do. Endowed with all of Ebner-Eschenbach's ideals of strong, self-sufficient womanhood, Bozena also becomes the symbol of the motherly love for which her author had always yearned.¹⁴

As she portrayed her heroine and rendered her victorious over her tyrannical master, Marie Ebner herself emerged as a winner. Liberated from the repressed feelings of anger over her father's obstinate ways, she could henceforth deal with them much more objectively. She was now on the path to finding her identity.

While working on Bozena she received some very encouraging news. Her Erzählungen, though not yet widely known, had brought her some positive critical acclaim. Julius Rodenberg, the editor of the renowned journal Deutsche Rundschau in Berlin, had read the reviews and, always

on the look out for novelistic contributions, invited Marie Ebner to send him her next work (B II 172). Honoured and happy about Rodenberg's overtures she replied shortly afterwards: "I shall be delighted to follow your kind request [...]. If only it were given to me to come up to your high opinion and to send you soon a work which you will find worthy of your support" (B II 172). At that time she was still plagued by self-doubts and by insecurity about her writing and knew how much she depended on the good will of publishers and critics.

Work on Bozena progressed slowly -- after forty days only forty pages were written -- and Marie Ebner was often depressed and doubtful about its success. She therefore began to rely more and more on her friend Ida Fleischl whose judgement she trusted implicitly and whose advice she gladly followed. Her diary of November 23, 1875 reveals: "Afternoon: Ida, to whom I read the scene between Barbara and Bernhard and who rejected it with complete justification" (Binneberg 197). Desperate about her work, she later wrote in her diary:

I certainly could earn my upkeep better with a wheelbarrow than with a pen. In the afternoon Ida and I looked at the beginning of the story. It is impossible, has to become quite different, more uniform, simple prose. Have laboured several hours in vain to make the beginning work. It is good only for the stove (Binneberg 199).

Yet, with Ida's and also with Betty Paoli's advice and moral support she finally accomplished her task. Less than a year after starting Bozena she was able to send her manuscript to Rodenberg who had promised: "... for gifts from a pen like yours, most gracious lady, there has to be and will always be space" (Binneberg 200). Therefore it came as a great surprise and disappointment when he rejected the story because he felt it was too long for serialisation. Two other editors likewise rejected the work since

it was split into too many scenes and did not move along fast enough (Binneberg 208). It was therefore a great comfort to Marie Ebner when she could sign a contract with Cotta who, the year before had published her first collection of stories. Elated and relieved she noted that in her joy she had bought a pencil for the occasion which cost her sixteen guilders, but which was absolutely useless for writing (Binneberg 202). Cotta would print 1020 copies, she would receive 500 Marks and twenty complimentary copies. The book would be sold for 4.20 Marks in Germany.

Soon after its publication Marie Ebner sent copies of Bozena to her friends and from most of them received very positive reactions. Betty Paoli, with whom in the meantime she had become quite friendly, wrote a very positive review in the Allgemeine Zeitung, stressing her talent for characterization and her narrative skills. The writer Hieronymus Lorm likewise took notice of Bozena and gave a very favourable account of it in the Abendpost. He stressed Ebner-Eschenbach's empathy and psychological insight and especially appreciated her humour which, he thought, contributed greatly to the book's effect (Binneberg 212).

Lorm became an important influence on Marie Ebner's literary career. She had heard about him through her friend Ida Fleischl and in 1868 started to correspond with him, probably partly out of pity for his tragic fate. Although she found writing to him time-consuming, because she had to carefully weigh every word she committed to paper, she faithfully kept up her correspondence with him (TB II 579). Hieronymus Lorm, alias Heinrich Landesmann, was of Jewish descent and had grown up in the Southern Moravian town of Nikolsburg. At fifteen he contracted an ailment which gradually caused him to turn deaf and partly blind. He early



Heinrich Landesmann / Hieronymus Lorm

started to write. Yet he had to leave Vienna in 1847 on account of his satirical and subversive essay, "Wiens poetische Schwingen und Federn" (Vienna's poetical wings and feathers), which was not well received by the censor in the Restauration period. He then went to Berlin, where he adopted the pseudonym Hieronymus Lorm and later moved to Dresden, where he was able to make a name for himself.

Besides critical essays he wrote several collections of stories and novellas. He also had a penchant for formulating aphorisms. He knew Ida von Fleischl-Marxow and her family well and visited them whenever he came to Vienna. In 1860 he dedicated his first collection of novellas Intimes Leben to Ida von Fleischl "in appreciation and affection" (Straub 101).

Like Ebner-Eschenbach, Lorm had written a social satire while staying at an Austrian spa -- Gräfenberg bei Freiwaldau -- and had published his Gräfenberger Aquarelle and his Erzählungen eines Heimgekehrten in 1858, the same year Marie Ebner's Aus Franzensbad had appeared (Straub 87/88). In her letter of September 4, 1868 from Bad Kissingen, at a time when Marie Ebner herself felt sad, tired and rather unwell, she still tried to console Hieronymus Lorm, urging him to continue to live for his loved ones and his work.

You want to cry because you have to live? -- I know, however, that if you knew for certain today, that you would no longer exist one year from now -- you would feel pain in your heart. Are there not people for whom you would shed your blood drop by drop? Did you not start a work into which you want to pour your soul? One is carrying the world in one's heart and one should die? Chase away such sad thoughts! (BF 67).

Although the two writers had a lot in common in terms of their interest in the life and the problems of the Austrian aristocracy and in terms of their

belief in the importance of education and self-discipline, Marie Ebner could not really warm up to Lorm's work. In the appendix to her diary of 1869 she noted, after seeing a performance of Lorm's play Am Camin: "How happy should I have been if I could have said that I liked it. But..." (TB I 253). Having read some of his stories she further confided in her diary: "Cleverly made, with much intelligence, little poetic talent. People like fish. Inheritances play a great role. Money occupies a major place" (Vesely 225). Lorm's work Der Naturgenuss was too heavy and too difficult for her to understand and the lighter parts reminded her too much of "feuilleton-gossip" (ibid.).

In March 1869 Ebner-Eschenbach mentioned in her diary that Lorm's comedy Curgäste was presented at a soirée at the Fleischls. Unfortunately, the actor Lewinski read it very badly and did not bring out the many comic and witty passages of the play. Therefore Lorm's wife, who was present, began to cry, although Ida did her best to comfort her (TB I 248). Marie Ebner empathized greatly with Lorm. She knew how important it was for a writer to see his work appreciated and she also knew that Lorm, due to his physical condition, especially depended on encouragement and literary success. Her letter of January 18, 1876 must have been a great joy to him, because she assured him of her admiration for his work:

I really do not know what gives me the courage to write to you. You impress me more than ever, since I had the privilege to read your manuscript to Ida. It contains such a wealth of beauty and wisdom and is at the same time so magnificently lucid and understandable that I can only bow down before the mind which has thought out these ideas (BF 67/68).

She especially appreciated Lorm as a letter writer and also adopted part of his Schopenhauerian philosophy: "You have completely converted me to that pessimism which elevates goodness to the highest rank of human

qualities, and which leads to blissful renunciation" (BF 68). She later also admired his work Grundloser Optimismus as she stated in a letter to Josef Breuer (BC 29). By now Marie Ebner counted so much on Lorm's moral support that she also recommended him to Saar, whose novella Das Haus Reichegg also suffered from lack of critical interest. She persuaded Saar to send his work to Hieronymus Lorm, stating: "He is the only one among the journalists (whom I know) who has regard for ideals" (Kindermann 47). Saar promptly followed her advice, hoping that "the brave Hieronymus" would also help him to become better known in Austria (Kindermann 50). In May 1877 Marie Ebner met Lorm personally for the first time at Ida Fleischl's home. After this meeting she no longer addressed him with "Verehrtester Herr" (Most Revered Sir) in her letters, but called him "Verehrter, lieber Freund" (Revered, dear friend). Yet she never accepted his invitation to visit him in Dresden. She excused herself with pressing family obligations which forced her to stay at home. At the end of her letter, in which she tried to make Lorm understand the reasons for not visiting him, she wrote: "I am in bondage, but voluntarily so, and therefore I should not complain about it" (BF 70). She preferred to correspond with Lorm and especially welcomed the opportunity to discuss her literary plans with him. She also valued him as a critic of her work. In 1869 she had sent him her manuscript of Das Waldfräulein, and from then on had kept him informed about every new project. When he offered to write a review of Bozena in the Abendpost Marie Ebner was honored and overjoyed. Since her devastating experience with theatre critics, she was horrified of write-ups in the press, but she trusted Lorm and knew that he would be fair. Having read his very positive account in the paper she

wrote to him:

Overall I can only thank the patron saint of the poets and pray to him to keep harm away from me. What do I mean by harm? Ridicule and vituperation. If I am saved from these, I owe it to the powerful protection which a review of my booklet in the Abendpost has granted me, but for which I am not allowed to express thanks. Would you believe me, the author forbade it (BF 69).

After reading the historian Adam Wolf's positive discussion of Bozena in the Neue Freie Presse Ebner-Eschenbach remarked to Saar:

I am very grateful for it, because I hope that the approval of the highly respected historian will protect me from being made fun of in the worst of all big papers. I do not expect anything but vituperation from our critics and I am grateful to them and to God if they keep silent. In this very moment, where my family greatly takes note of my literary disasters it would be twice embarrassing (Kindermann 47/8).

This time she was spared the embarrassment -- literary critics largely ignored her work.¹⁵ The public was not yet ready to recognize Marie Ebner as a great writer. The average reader may not have been attracted to Bozena because the trend was towards suspense novels with a fast-paced action (Binneberg 208). Another reason may have been the public's prejudice against women writers.

Women belonged in the home and were to deploy their talents within the domestic sphere. If they ventured into public life they rendered themselves suspicious (Necker XIII).

At the end of 1877 Cotta still had 620 unsold copies¹⁶, a fact which led Baron Cotta, the owner of the firm, to solemnly vow that he would never publish anything written by a "South German woman aristocrat" (B II 160). He was obviously aware of the fact that some aristocrats as well as commoners tended to react negatively to aristocratic writers.¹⁷ Yet in December 1877 he asked Marie Ebner for permission to include her stories

"Ein Spätgeborener", "Chlodwig" and "Die Grossmutter" in a new series of the "Volksbibliothek", a sign that readers had begun to take an interest in them (B II 164).

Shortly afterwards Cotta was overtaken by tragedy: the business was close to bankruptcy, rumours about financial and other wrong-doings were flying. Cotta's seventeen year-old son hanged himself, Baron Reischach, Cotta's companion shot himself dead -- and Baron Cotta, aged seventy, died soon afterwards (B II 160). The new management, disappointed with the lack of readers' interest in Bozena, did not accept any more of Ebner's works, a decision it was later to regret. Only in 1895, to Marie Ebner's great surprise, Cotta decided to bring out a second edition of Bozena. The author was just then in St. Gilgen on a holiday when she learned the news and wrote to the critic Moritz Necker about the "resurrection" of her book:

It came to nobody more unexpectedly than to me. I considered Bozena dead and buried: it makes me profoundly happy that she is now accepted by the people and that especially housemaids are asking for her in the lending libraries (Binneberg 215).

She had to wait nineteen years to see Bozena revived, and she then enthusiastically began to revise the rather sloppy and inconsistent orthography of her first edition. She also tried to simplify her vocabulary and her sentences, thus achieving a precision of style which was thought to be more appealing to readers and critics alike. After four months the second edition of Bozena was sold out and Cotta decided to have a third edition. In 1908, when Cotta planned an eighth edition, Marie Ebner triumphantly wrote in her diary:

Julie is reading Bozena to us. I cannot help thinking of the rejection the book found at its first appearance and must say now, as I face it like a stranger, that all those who did not see from the story that the author had some talent, were not

very incisive (Binneberg 224).

As early as 1877 Marie Ebner had been asked by the editor of the Bohemian journal Pokrok to give permission for translation and publication of Bozena. She was very keen on having her work translated and even offered to pay the fee Cotta demanded for the right of translation, but unfortunately the deal came to nothing. Helene Tafel, a friend of Ebner's since the 1880s, however, translated the novel into Italian (Binneberg 227). Finally, when Bozena was translated into French a happy Marie Ebner wrote to Cotta: "May my favourite child, my old Bozena, find a reception even approximately as friendly as it has found it in Germany, largely thanks to your good offices" (Binneberg 227).

Yet in 1876, after Bozena's first publication, things looked rather bleak. Marie Ebner worried a lot about the slow sales of her book and seriously considered giving up writing altogether. In her diary she wrote:

It is with my stories as it had been with my plays. The first one has gained a respectable success, the following ones bring me disappointment after disappointment. I have made an end of the writing of plays, I shall -- hopefully -- have the strength to cease writing altogether (TZ 729/30).

She had, however, a much deeper worry at that time. Sophie, her dearly beloved sister-in-law was suffering from a severe heart problem. Countess Sophie Dubsky, née Stockau, had been the widow of Count Josip Jelacic de Buzim, a Croatian politician and soldier. As provincial governor of Croatia, he had led the army against the Hungarian revolutionaries in 1848/9 and had quelled the uprising with the help of Austria and Russia. In his younger years he had served as a soldier in Italy and Bosnia. Once the nationalists came to power in Hungary, the Austrian government sent him

to Croatia as a military commander and gave him instructions to occupy the Croatian port of Rijeka. Under his influence Croatia separated from Hungary's nationalist regime. Yet Austria did not approve of this act and removed Jelacic from office. Later he was rehabilitated and entrusted with the task of taking Imperial troops to Hungary, where, by defeating Artur Görgey, he helped end the revolution. That same year Jelacic also led his Croatian troops into Vienna, where likewise a revolution had broken out. In 1855 Jelacic was made a count as a reward for his services to the monarchy (EB, Vol.6, 525). He died in 1859. Marie Ebner's brother Adolph had met Jelacic's widow in Croatia. Yet before their engagement he and Sophie had to overcome some resistance from the Stockau family, as can be seen from Ebner-Eschenbach's diary of February 28, 1863: "Interview between Papa and Count Stockau. Fruitless. Adolph departed for Reichenberg. She is in Novi dvor" (TB I 5). On March 4, 1863 Marie Ebner noted with great relief in her diary that Adolph had returned from Croatia engaged, and the next day she wrote: "Adolph's interview with Count Stockau very stormy, but it no longer does any harm" (TB I 5). After her first meeting with Sophie Ebner-Eschenbach wrote in her diary: "My future sister-in-law is a lovable and magnificent woman. There is something grand about her on account of her naturalness and lack of pretense" (TB I 7). The couple was married on May 10, 1863 at Castle Reichenburg, the home of Julie, Duchess of Waldburg-Wurzach. Marie Ebner did not attend the wedding but wrote in her diary: "Dear Adolph, dear Sophie, I think of you; my warmest blessings are with you" (TB I 9).

Her first impressions of Sophie had been correct. The two women became close friends and always had a very warm regard for each other.

Marie Ebner sympathized with Sophie after a miscarriage and rejoiced with her when her first daughter, Maria Gisela Eugenie Sophie, called Stutzi, was born in 1864. This was an event of great importance for Ebner-Eschenbach. In her diary she wrote: "For nothing in the world would I miss the moment when the little one arrived" (TB I 36). She always prided herself that she had known Stutzi longer even than her own father, who had been away hunting and who saw his daughter only four hours after her birth.

Adolph, by then a very prominent man, was elected to the Moravian Parliament in 1865 and lived at Castle Skalitzka in the Weisskirchen area. Marie Ebner often stayed there with Sophie when Adolph was away on business. In 1867 the Dubskys moved to Castle Löschna, an estate Adolph had bought from his father and renovated with great care. The other Dubskys, the Kinskys and the Ebner-Eschenbachs regularly visited there and kept close contact. Marie Ebner often rode with Adolph, her favourite brother, through the forests and meadows and immensely enjoyed the scenery (TB I 201).

Adolph and Sophie had two more children. Victor, and Eugen, to all of whom Marie Ebner became a doting aunt. She watched them grow up, told them stories and fairy tales and suffered with them when they were ill. When, in 1876, Sophie began to suffer from a heart condition the family was devastated. Marie Ebner worried so much that she could not think about her writing anymore. To Saar she once wrote:

A grave worry is oppressing me and my family. The wife of my brother Adolph, my most beloved sister-in-law, is down with a severe heart condition. There is no hope, and we have come to the point where our boldest wishes for her do not desire anything else but a painless death. We are unable to even think of what is going to happen then, how my brother

will survive the terrible blow which is imminent (Kindermann 47).

Sophie was finally released from her suffering on January 17, 1877. All her life Marie Ebner would remember her sincerity, loyalty and her generosity of spirit and would be proud when she noticed that her nieces and nephews exhibited their late mother's admirable qualities. Sophie was the type of woman Marie Ebner adored. She had the love, compassion and strength of character many of her female protagonists display.

Ebner-Eschenbach was heartbroken by the loss of her sister-in-law and her heart overflowed with pity for the three motherless children. They now became her first concern. To Hieronymus Lorm she once wrote that the three little ones took much of her time but that she truly enjoyed looking after them. About herself and her husband she said: "It is immensely good for both of us old, childless folks to have suddenly gained great importance in the life of three little persons, who are themselves so important to us" (BF 70). And she continued, claiming that writing her fictional work was not a priority for her. "If I write a few novels less because of these children, it will be a very small misfortune; but if I succeed in contributing something to their becoming good, helpful and loving human beings, it will be a very great accomplishment" (BF 70).

She watched over the children's education, regularly invited them to her home with their tutors and governesses, and also took them to outings during the summer in Zdislawitz. With Stutzi, the oldest of the Dubsky children, she had forged a particularly strong bond, which would last all her life. When the little girl was sick, Marie Ebner noted it in her diary, where she also collected her niece's funny utterances (TB I 282). When the children were older, she wrote stage pieces for them to be performed



Adolph Dubsky, Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach's brother

at family celebrations, and Stutzi always excelled in them (B II 163).

Yet in spite of her preoccupation with the children, who remained her first priority until her brother Adolph married again, Marie Ebner still found time to think about her literary work. She knew that she had to write in order to relieve her suffering. In the fall of 1876, under the influence of Sophie's pending death, she had started the story "Nach dem Tode", in which she described a nobleman, who begins to love and appreciate his wife only after her death. She may have thought of Adolph, who sometimes had been in a bad mood and at odds with Sophie (TB I 107) and had often made her unhappy because of his many absences (TB I 282). Business had always been more important to him than his family.

Adolph, the "revolutionary and democrat" (TB I 82/3) may again have been on Ebner-Eschenbach's mind, when she conceived Die Freiherren von Gemperlein in Zdislawitz.

She also must have thought of Viktor, her second brother, who in 1865 and 1866 had been turned down by several ladies he had envisaged as marriage partners. At one time Marie Ebner herself had tried to become matchmaker, at another time his stepmother Xaverine Dubsky had tried to be of help. In her diary Marie Ebner had written in February 1866: "Mama told me little Julie Erdödy had declared she could not understand how one could marry 'a Dubsky', and that Victor was an 'old baldpate'. With her he would not stand a chance" (TB I 79). Viktor, having searched for quite a while, later married Rosine Countess Thun-Hohenstein. He became Austrian ambassador to Teheran and Athens and later settled on his estate Ziadlowitz. He may have lent some features to the more traditional brother of the two Gemperleins.

On September 14, 1867, Ebner-Eschenbach had written in her diary:

Early in the morning Adolf and Viktor went to Löschna. Viktor has marriage plans and intends to pay a visit to the people at Krasna. Before and during breakfast there was a lively discussion of these marriage plans-- the "asses" were flying back and forth, one had to watch out not to be hit by one on one's head (TB I 203)

A week later she had noted: "In the afternoon my beloved, pugnacious brothers came back from Löschna" (TB I 204). Now she wrote the story about the two brothers Gemperlein, whose prevalent character trait was that very pugnaciousness (275). While her relatives went on outings, she spent days in the company of these two eccentric gentlemen (TB II 521)
18.

Friedrich, the royalist, and Ludwig, the republican, are the descendants of the ancient and noble dynasty of the Gemperlein. They both have left public life and reside together on their inherited, dearly beloved country estate Wlastowitz, "the essence of everything good and beautiful" (276). True to temperament they quarrel a lot about social, political, and religious problems, but they are both highly esteemed by the people in their neighbourhood.

Shortly after taking up residence in Wlastowitz the two brothers had decided to marry. As befitted his station, Friedrich had selected his bride from the hereditary aristocracy, but consulted the genealogical almanac, instead of personally going courting. Ludwig, in accordance with his republican ideals, had decided on a commoner. Yet soon their hopes were shattered. Friedrich's distant love, registered in the almanac as Josephine, turns out to be Joseph, a man, and Ludwig's Lina Apfelblüh is already married to a notary.

One day, they visit their neighbour, an old widowed baroness, who

is very fond of them and enjoys setting them up against each other. Since their hunter has recently shot one of her deer, she has vowed to play them a trick and to make them both fall in love with her visiting niece, Klara Siebert. Her plan succeeds. Ludwig and Friedrich are immediately taken by Klara, a descendant of an old Saxon aristocratic family, and they both want to marry her. Yet after an accident each of the brothers generously makes up his mind to renounce the admired lady and leave her to the other as a sign of brotherly love. As it turns out, Klara is already married, and the Gemperleins learn from the baroness that they have fallen into her snare. They never marry and thus the dynasty of the Gemperlein dies out.

By October 1877 the novella was completed but Marie Ebner wanted it to rest for a while before giving it a final revision. In December she sent the manuscript to Cotta in Stuttgart, but received a rejection. The publisher thought he had run too great a risk with her Erzählungen and Bozena and did not want to embark on another futile adventure. Julius Rodenberg also declined publication and so did other editors. On May 27, 1878 Ebner-Eschenbach lamented in her diary: "The 'Gemperlein' have received their four rejections" (TB II 567). Baron Falke, the editor of Die Dioskuren, finally accepted the novella for his journal. Later, in 1881, the publisher Ebhard in Berlin included the "Gemperlein" in his publication of Marie Ebner's Neue Erzählungen. Hofrat Hemsén, librarian at the court of Württemberg, was much taken with it and recommended it to Paul Heyse for his collection Neuer Deutscher Novellenschatz of 1883. Heyse immediately accepted the work because he enjoyed its humour (Heyse 9).¹⁹ Ferdinand von Saar also liked the "Gemperlein". Thanking him for his compliments,

Marie Ebner wrote: "Honestly speaking, I love my silly old bachelors and what one does to them one has done to me" (Kindermann 53). During World War I she received a postcard from an acquaintance, who likewise loved her "Gemperlein" and had read them during the battle of Ypres (B II 298).

In 1879 Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach realized a wish she had had for a long time. Ever since her youth she had been greatly interested in clocks and watches and now with Adolph's gift of a Nürnberger Ei -- one of the earliest, egg-shaped pocket watches from Nuremberg -- she started a collection of her own. She bought a work-desk and tools and started lessons with a former watchmaker, who now sold watches in his shop. She learned how to repair damaged clockworks and entered deeply into the work and jargon of the craft. At first she bought old clockworks, in order to study them, take them apart and put them together again. Often she paid horrendous prices, as sellers cheated her, but gradually she learned to recognize valuable watches and became familiar with most famous clockmakers.

In 1896 she was asked to write an article for Westermanns Monatshefte about her watches. Since she had read widely in the history of watches she could make her essay interesting through a great deal of anecdotal detail. She wrote that she considered herself quite knowledgable, but that she also was occasionally cheated in a deal. Thus she admitted that on December 28, 1879 she thought she had acquired a much coveted Kalenderuhr (calendar watch) made by the famous Breguet. Later her master-watchmaker enlightened her that she had erred, but comforted her by assuring that it was still a very beautiful and useful timepiece. On another occasion she bought a watch under the impression

that it was a creation of the famous Renaissance watchmaker Peter Hele. When she came home she discovered that the watch had the shape of a snail and could not possibly have been made by the famous craftsman:

I was ashamed of myself and hung the uncomfortable reminder of my great embarrassment into the shadiest corner of my clock-case. The other clocks, the golden ones, the enameled ones, and especially those ornamented with flashing jargon seemed to look with contempt at the newcomer in her simple worn-out silver dress. Filled with disdain I closed the case: I did not want to have anything more to do with clocks that day and did not wind any of them. Next morning there was deep silence among the old gossips, only -- curiously! from the corner in which I had deposited the Pseudo-Hele the day before, there sounded the quick and merrily energetic "pulsare" of the Nuremberg girl. She gave a sign of life, she wanted to be noted. Thus I took her again into my hand -- I had to admire her. It may not have been Peter Henle who made her -- but it was still a master (536).

From that moment on the "Pseudo-Hele" received a special place in Ebner-Eschenbach's clock-cabinet. By the end of her life she had a collection of two-hundred watches. Each of them was an individual -- each one had its peculiarities of mechanism, its own history and its own character.

Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach later bequeathed her watch-collection to the City of Vienna. It suffered greatly during World-War II when through bombing and looting many of the most precious pieces were lost. But the "Uhrenmuseum" in Schulhof 2 still keeps a room with the "Sammlung Marie Freiin Ebner von Eschenbach" which contains over a hundred watches from her collection together with her handwritten inventory. She meticulously entered the period, the locale, the watchmaker, the species, the price, the year the watch was purchased by her or given to her, and commented about the state of repair. The room also contains some paintings. One is of Marie Ebner at age seventy-one, by Marie Müller, the other shows her study at Spiegelgasse 1, painted by Alois Hänisch by

order of the magistrate of Vienna.

Marie Ebner's expertise in watches became well-known and she was occasionally consulted by colleagues. Thus Jacob Minor asked her advice in connection with the verse in Goethe's Faust "The clock stands still, the hand is falling" and Marie Ebner explained the phrase to him with great professional insight (B II 337). All her friends admired her skill with watches and her delicate, ivory-like hands with which she so affectionately handled them. As Hermine Villinger once wrote:

Just now a ray of sun fell slanting through the window of the study upon the clock-cabinet and touched Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach's hands when she opened the drawer and introduced her watches to me for the first time -- these rare fine masterpieces and these rare fine hands of the owner -- they are as if they belonged together, so lovingly, so tenderly the hands deal with these little clocklets, as if they were handling living, breathing little birds. They are alive to her, the owner knows the story of each of these small clockworks in its very detail, she knows the masters who created these clocks and watches, which belong to the most different periods (Villinger 62).

And Erica von Handel-Mazzetti commented:

I still see her graceful ivory-like hands lift piece after piece from the bottom of the velvet-clad box, which contained these treasures; I still hear her dear, impish voice explain the individual pieces. "That is a little lady who knows quite a few tricks. Now show your stuff", she said. On the outside of an Empire pocket watch there was an ivory miniature girl seated on a virginal working two tiny ivory hammers, while a little gentleman in the background of the miniature relief played the violin. Marie let the works play and there was the sound of a jolly clarinette, thin and fine like the humming of a fly. "Look, what sometimes angers me. I recently read a poem -- it was quite pretty -- in which Baucanson figured as a watchmaker. Did you ever hear such a thing? He never made any watch in all his life, only automata" (qtd in Mumbauer 31/32).

How much Marie Ebner empathized with watches is revealed in her indignant reply to the poet Erdmann Edler who told her about his own fifty-year-old clock which he had treated rather inconsiderately: "Cruel



Two pocket-watches from Ebner-Eschenbach's collection

man! Do you not know that the whole life of the clock from the first to the last tick is nothing but suffering, and it cannot even cry out or crawl into hiding as we do ?" (B II 287). She compared the escapement and the balance spring of a clock to suffering humankind which is prevented from moving forward by a cog. How attached she was to her watches can be seen from a statement she made in old age when talking to Alexander Gross, a connoisseur: "My dear watches make dying hard for me. Who will treat them as well as I did after I have gone?" (B II 287).²⁰

In 1914, however, she decided to part with her beloved watch-collection in order to fund a "model kindergarten" in Zdislawitz. She had greatly benefitted from her watches not only from an aesthetic and scholarly point of view, but also for psychological and emotional reasons. She could lovingly care for them and by doing so, avoid a total surrender to her strenuous literary work.²¹

CHAPTER 3:

"THE MOST BEAUTIFUL THING THERE IS"

It may be a coincidence that the time of Marie Ebner's apprenticeship as a watchmaker was also the time when she wrote her first instantly successful work. Possibly there is a deeper connection. Watchmaking and repairing gave her the satisfaction of seeing her efforts succeed in a visible and demonstrable way. It helped her to widen her personal horizon and to gain a sense of accomplishment through active involvement. It gave her self-confidence, took her mind away from personal problems and provided a new purpose to her existence. She loved her watches and conscientiously cared for them, and, like Lotti, the eponymous heroine of her new story, she gained "daily new joy... peace, cheerfulness and independence" (862).

Marie Ebner's diary entries reveal that Lotti die Uhrmacherin was begun in May 1879 and completed in November the same year. On the 26th May, 1879 she wrote: "Fräulein Lotti begins to occupy a larger space in my soul. I am giving her all the watches I would like to possess" (B II 170).

Not only did Marie Ebner put her heroine in possession of the watches she had liked to own, she also endowed her with a father she herself would have wanted to possess. By writing Bozena she had sublimated the fear of her bullying father and had become her own therapist. As she has the narrator say about Lotti, the watchmaker: "Her sufferings had to be fully lived through before they could die. There was no use of slinking away, or of talking them away, they demanded their

right and ceded only after justice had been done to them" (888). Now she was free to create a father in whom she could invest all her ideals.

Johannes Fessler is a deeply caring man, whose goal in life is to live in peace and happiness with his children and to train them to continue his beloved craft of watchmaking. He treats his children as equals, calling them "my journeymen... and later with pride, my helpers" (860). As they get more accomplished in the art of watchmaking, he even considers them his partners who, hopefully, will one day surpass him (860). He does not discriminate against his daughter, does not believe her to be inferior to his son. He furthers her talent and praises each of her accomplishments.

Accepted by her loving father and by her dedicated, adopted brother, Lotti has spent a happy childhood and has grown into an integrated personality. She has "a rich source of serenity" in her soul (852) and is at one with life. With such a background she possesses the strength to face and solve the problems that invariably will come her way. Her peaceful existence is interrupted by a short and rather stormy engagement to Hermann Halwig, a young, exuberant clerk, who writes novellas on the side. Yet soon Lotti realizes that Halwig is not the man she can marry. The more convinced he becomes of his talent and the more vehemently he insists that his bride admire his rather trashy work, the less highly she thinks of his accomplishments. As Halwig reveals his true character and his lack of self-control by throwing temper-tantrums, Lotti calmly dissolves the engagement. She still loves Halwig, but knows that she would never be happy with him. Trained by her idealistic father to demand the highest standard of a work of art, she has contempt for those who throw their talent away for material benefit.

After several years during which she does not hear from Halwig, Lotti learns that he has married an aristocrat. She also finds out that he has turned into a hack writer in order to provide for his beautiful, elegant and high-living wife. Soon Lotti hears that Halwig is close to bankruptcy and in a moment of great pity she decides to sell the precious watch-collection she has inherited from her father. Halwig never learns that Lotti is his benefactress. He is now free to buy a country estate from his parents-in-law and to give up writing for the sheer purpose of making a living. He now has the opportunity to develop into an artist (937). Yet his peaceful life in the country is nothing but an interlude. His wife misses social life and he, addicted to writing cheap trash, likewise returns to the city to produce again cheap, sensational works.

It looks as if Lotti's sacrifice was in vain. Yet she is convinced of having made the right decision by selling her watch collection "to save the soul of a man" (929) who once was dear to her. She knows that her father would have done the same (931). His altruism is the guiding principle of her life, an altruism which ultimately leads to her own and her brother's happiness.

Writing Lotti was an emotional outlet for Marie Ebner and a means to employ her newly gained knowledge about watches, their origins and creators. It also gave her the opportunity to vent her frustration about the increasing number of writers who, in order to make money, catered to the public's sensationalism and thus sacrificed their aesthetic standards of true art. After a theatre performance in 1866 she had written in her diary: "It hurts, this art which has obviously been created for material reasons" (TB I 105). Now in Lotti she created a mercenary writer, who

succumbed to vulgar public taste. While accusing Halwig of degrading art, Marie Ebner simultaneously voiced her criticism of the reading public, who demanded and generously rewarded writers of trashy literature and often had no appreciation of aesthetic excellence.

When the story was completed, Ebner-Eschenbach admitted in her diary: "Of all my children, this is the one born with the greatest pain. If it is viable, then mind has won a victory over matter, since the latter has mightily resisted its coming into existence" (B II 171). In spite of her fear that she would never be able to live up to Julius Rodenberg's expectations she sent him the manuscript with the following words: "Here it is -- may it come up to your expectations. I leave it to you to decide whether to call it Lotti, die Uhrmacherin instead of Kunst und Handwerk (Art and Craft). I cannot tell you how happy I would be if you were satisfied with my work --because it cannot be expressed!" (B II 175). Rodenberg not only accepted the work, but praised it enthusiastically:

It makes me very happy to congratulate you on your new novel and to be able to tell you that you have created something which is high above the commonness of the day, not only in the nobility of its intentions but also in its poetic content and its technical execution. I spent a whole day with your Lotti and I felt so good, as if I was really close to a kind, pure, noble human being (B II 175).

He wholeheartedly agreed with Marie Ebner's moral and artistic message and knew that his readers would likewise approve of it. He further enjoyed the work's clarity and simplicity "in this time of exaggerations and incongruities" (B II 182).

Like many members of the educated classes, Rodenberg was aware of the cultural decline that had taken place in his country since the foundation of the German Empire in 1871 (Sagarra 342). As a writer and

editor he knew that in recent years aesthetic excellence had been sacrificed more and more at the expense of sensationalism and showy glorification of the state. Spiritual life was deteriorating,²² idealism, dignity and integrity were vanishing; many writers tailored their work to popular demand, and thus aesthetic standards were lowered. Rodenberg therefore truly appreciated Marie Ebner's conception of art and her concern with the preservation of highest artistic criteria. Imbued with neo-classical ideals, she considered a poet a priest "who has been entrusted with a sacred office here on earth" (Lotti 921).²³ She further advocated a work ethic in her story which greatly appealed to Rodenberg. He knew that all the bourgeois values described in Lotti, die Uhrmacherin, like modesty, loyalty, conscientiousness, adaptability to reality and humanitarian service, would find resonance with his readers, who liked to see themselves reflected in the works they read. After promising to publish Lotti soon in the Rundschau he expressed the hope that Marie von Ebner would "create many such works and give the Rundschau the opportunity to repay her loyalty" (B II 176). He also thanked her for her willingness to keep her promise to write something for his periodical in spite of his refusal not only of Bozena, but also of the Gemperlein and the Aphorisms which she had offered him in previous years.

If Rodenberg was happy to have a masterwork from the hands of Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach, confident that it met the standards which the readers of the Rundschau had come to expect, Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach was even happier to have finally arrived where she always wanted to be. She wrote enthusiastically:

My most daring and ambitious wishes are now fulfilled. For me it is more than I would ever have dared to dream, that you

not only send me "greetings" but also give me hope that I can come again. I have reached a goal which I have pursued for a long time -- that is the most beautiful thing there is, even if it happens at an age which is no longer beautiful, as you can see from the attached photograph (qtd. in Brandt 1004).

In the years to come she would send all her new works to Rodenberg. He published many of these, among them "Novelle in Korrespondenzkarten", "Die Unverstandene auf dem Dorfe", "Das Gemeindegeld", "Unsühnbar", "Oversberg", "Verschollen" and "Meine Kinderjahre", enhancing the author's reputation and the standing of his journal.

Rodenberg had been born Julius Levi in Rodenberg (Kurfürstentum Hessen) not far from Hanover, and later adopted the name of his home town as a family name. When taking on this new name he may have thought even more of the Rodenberg, the hill that had given the town its name and that had meant so much to him as a boy. It had always symbolized to him something mysterious, something that aroused his curiosity and inquisitiveness. Being a romantic boy he often climbed the mountain in order to reminisce and dream, because it was so quiet and peaceful "as if it were Sunday here forever" (*Kindheit* 148). The mountain was for him a place where "under the veils of the past there seemed to hide a promise of eternity" (ibid. 151). The mountain also saw Rodenberg's first rendezvous with a girl he adored. His parents had been orthodox, but rather liberal Jews, and especially Rodenberg's mother imbued the children with a love of music and the arts. Religious instruction with its emphasis on ethics and morality occupied an important place in Rodenberg's upbringing. His grand-mother often blessed him saying: "May God make you like Ephraim and Manasse" (ibid. 62), conveying to him the importance of living an exemplary life in the service of others.

The traditional Jewish legends impressed the young boy so strongly that he often dreamed of living among the biblical personages and participating with them in their divine missions. Due to his fascination with the biblical heroes and heroines, their values and traditions, the young Julius soon wrote dramas with biblical content, which he and his brothers and sisters performed at home for the entertainment of family and friends. He particularly enjoyed playing villains and tyrants (Kindheit 68). Having studied Hebrew he took great delight in reading the Scriptures -- especially the five books of Moses fascinated him -- and in translating the psalms. He soon started to write poetry, an occupation he kept up during his high-school years, towards the end of which he published his Vierzehn geharnischte Sonette (1850) at the Gymnasium in Rintelen.

After his graduation Rodenberg took up law and studied at the universities of Heidelberg, Göttingen and Berlin. In 1855 he travelled to Paris, then Europe's center of the arts, and worked there as a journalist. The next year saw him in Marburg, where he received his doctorate in law. From there he went to London, establishing lasting friendships with the exiled poet and social reformer Ferdinand Freiligrath and the writer and former member of the Prussian national assembly Johann Gottfried Kinkel. With both writers, who had had to leave their country on account of their political views, Rodenberg shared a great love of poetry and a deep sense of freedom and justice.

Between 1857 and 1861 Rodenberg travelled again, this time to Belgium, Holland, Denmark, Scotland, Ireland and then spent some time in Italy, the country that had inspired so many artists. From 1862 to 1864 he became the editor of the monthly Deutsches Magazin in Berlin and later

accepted the position of co-editor of the journals Bazar and Salon für Literatur, Kunst und Gesellschaft (Spiero 61).

In 1873 Rodenberg came to Vienna to attend the World Exposition. The city greatly impressed him and he enjoyed his stay there so much that he wrote a book called Wiener Sommertage, dedicating it to his Austrian friends Eduard Hanslick and Eduard Schön. In this book Rodenberg states that Vienna stimulated his imagination and that, compared to Berlin, it was much more humane and more hospitable.

In Vienna one feels like in an old, well lived-in home, where every corner has its long history, where one is surrounded by homely memories and where the shadows of the ancestors do not terrify but approach one in a friendly and caring manner... (212).

Rodenberg especially appreciated that present and past lived side by side in the Austrian capital and that this created a warm and welcoming ambience. Vienna, in his view, was "a city full of the poetry of the past" and it was "at the same time the city of the present" (114).

In 1874 Rodenberg founded the journal Deutsche Rundschau after the model of the French Révue des Deux Mondes. It was to become one of the most influential and prestigious literary journals, attracting writers like Paul Heyse, Gottfried Keller, Theodor Storm, Conrad Ferdinand Meyer and Theodor Fontane. Yet Rodenberg always received more scholarly essays than works of fiction, especially novels, which enjoyed great popularity at that time and were more and more read by the masses. He was therefore constantly in search of novelistic contributions. In a letter to Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach he once wrote: "Good novels are as rare as noble people" (B II 181).

After quite an extensive correspondence -- Marier Ebner wrote him



Julius Rodenberg

altogether 242 letters (Brandt 1002) -- Rodenberg and his newly found Austrian protégée finally met personally. Their common friend, Joseph von Weilen, president of the society "Concordia", invited Rodenberg to give a lecture in Vienna (B II 177/8). Afterwards he took him to Marie Ebner's home. Meeting the revered publisher was a noteworthy event, which she recorded in her diary: "Weilen came with Rodenberg, whom to meet was a great joy for me. He has a nice, quiet, extremely sympathetic manner and can narrate beautifully, interestingly and without pretence" (B II 178). During this meeting a friendship was forged which lasted almost forty years. For Rodenberg coming to Ebner-Eschenbach's home at Rothenturmstrasse 27 felt like returning home, since he had been there during his earlier visit to Vienna and had mentioned this very street in his book Wiener Sommertage as particularly romantic (184). In one of his first letters he had written to Marie Ebner:

So you live in the Rothenturmstrasse in Vienna, that dear old lane, which I walked up and down at least a hundred times with no other purpose but that I liked it; with the Lugeck and the Bären-Apotheke and the stone figures at the Regensburger Hof and the Durchhäuser, sometimes dark under the mighty old arches, sometimes bright from a strip of sunlight, which fell across the street, and the maze of stairways at the Lazzenhof and the Fischhof; and in the end always that old St.Stephen's Cathedral, of which I cannot think without becoming tender with longing, I would almost say with nostalgia (B II 173).

And how warmly he must have been received by the author who owed to him her fast-spreading recognition in Germany. Yet the relationship between editor and writer was based on more than mutual professional dependence: Julius Rodenberg and Marie Ebner were kindred spirits. They had a common urge for writing, a great interest in drama, in history and geography, a great admiration for beautiful scenery and especially of

mountains, which to both of them symbolized freedom from restraint. Both had a very vivid imagination and shared the same ethical values. What also linked them was a great love for Austria and a belief in the spiritual unity of all German speaking countries in Europe.

Marie Ebner knew that Rodenberg and his journal stood for the idea of a Greater Germany, if not in the political, then at least in the cultural sense. In reply to his letter she once wrote to him: "You possess in every Austrian, who loves his country, a deeply grateful devotee - - you have done more than justice to my people and now to me" (B II 172). Rodenberg's love for Austria made him use his Rundschau as an instrument to foster German-Austrian relations. After meeting with Marie Ebner he wrote:

I have to thank you for the generous words you spoke to me personally. Yes, most gracious lady, I am a friend of Austria and my heart is still in Vienna. How could it be different towards a city, a country from which I received so much good and so much sincere sympathy? All the more pleasing would it be for me if I could tie one of the most important talents that have come from Austria to the Deutsche Rundschau, which has made it its concern to fully preserve and to enhance the connection of the life of the mind and soul between Germany and Austria (B II 173).

Looking at the long and fruitful professional relationship between Rodenberg and Ebner-Eschenbach it is difficult to say what was more admirable: Rodenberg's candid assessment of the works of the writer, for whom he had so much respect and love or Marie Ebner's willingness to accept Rodenberg's criticism without a grudge. When he rejected her 1878 novella "Margarethe" because he did not like the eponymous heroine's character, Marie Ebner put the manuscript aside and did not look at it for another ten years.²⁴ Only when Fritz Mauthner asked her in the late eighties for a contribution to his Magazin für Literatur did she send it to

him, but with the request to suggest changes. She respected Rodenberg all the more for his honesty towards her and let him know: "You are truly a friend to me, you will always remain so, as I shall remain to my last hour your grateful devotee" (B II 180). But sometimes she also argued with him about changes he suggested to her work. When Rodenberg objected to her novel Unsühnbar on account of Countess Dolph's frivolous talk, Marie Ebner pleaded with him:

Best friend, please leave the bad jokes of old Dolph about the "interesting matters". I am not really responsible for her prattle, am I ? She has learned from the women of the eighteenth century -- from the ladies, I should have said -- and compared to them she is still sugar-water. Mercy for right! I beg again most kindly (qtd. in Bittrich 240).

Rodenberg gave in and Countess Dolph was allowed to suggest that the two Wonsheim ladies withdrew from social life because they were in the family way.

On another occasion Rodenberg must have been offended for some reason, because he wrote a rather unpleasant letter to his friend. Post-haste she replied: "Your letter hurts me deeply and makes me despair of a friendship on which I have built like on a rock. Please re-read it and tell me whether you would write it again" (qtd. in Alkemade 69). And Rodenberg responded kindly, promising his friend "amende honorable" (ibid.). He appreciated Marie Ebner's friendship and loyalty too much to want to cause a rift. He also knew that she counted on his moral support and encouragement. He therefore was not sparing with his praise, where he thought it was due. He repeatedly commended Ebner-Eschenbach's work for its "Simplicity, unpretentiousness -- virtues which one only begins to appreciate in this time of lack of style and exaggerations. What can be more simple, more unpretentious than nature? And is she not master of

us all ?" (B II 182). Grateful for his understanding Ebner-Eschenbach once told her friend: "If only there were a few more who read as you do. But only a friend will read that way who is at the same time a poet" (Schmidt 176). Even in later years, when editors of various journals vied for her works, Rodenberg's judgement remained the most important to her. She always considered it her highest goal to be worthy of publication in his Rundschau (Brandt 1004).

One of the greatest moments in Marie Ebner's life was reading Rodenberg's letter after she had sent him her partly completed manuscript of Das Gemeindekind in 1886. He stated:

Dear friend, this is the most beautiful work you ever wrote, and not only that, it is something of the most beautiful which has been written for a long time. If, as an inner voice tells me, the further development and the end matches this piece, you have created a masterpiece which will last in German literature and it will be to the greater glory of the Rundschau to have printed it first (B II 186).

Ebner-Eschenbach was so overwhelmed and moved by this praise that she could not sleep all night. The next day she wrote to Rodenberg: "It is not a book which comes to you, dear friend, it is a soul: all that is on my heart, all that I wish to lay at the heart of good people" (B II 187). She trusted Rodenberg's judgement implicitly and agreed to all the changes he suggested for the publication in his journal. He, on his part, always tried to encourage her and regularly reported about the positive reactions he had received from readers of her works. Rarely have editors and authors been such supportive and trusting friends and rarely did an editor show such deep understanding for a writer's work. About Marie Ebner's story "Oversberg" he once remarked:

You have succeeded magnificently. I do not know what I should admire more: the simplicity and naturalness of the

report or the art which, I should say, rather hides in it than reveals itself. What a pleasant atmosphere at the dinner party, how lively and individually each one of these characters is conceived and executed, and with what power does from this harmless surrounding the devastating picture emerge, of whose tragic effect even the narrator does not have a clue (B II 194/5).

On the occasion of Rodenberg's sixtieth birthday many essays were written about him and his achievements in the field of German art and literature and writers regularly mentioned that he deserved credit for having discovered the by now prominent writer Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach. In a letter to her Rodenberg later modestly observed: "Indeed, even if I have to refuse any other merit: I am proud of this, although it was more my good luck than my achievement" (B II 194).

In 1892 Marie Ebner decided to send her long-time friend the watch she had mentioned in Lotti, die Uhrmacherin, the novella Rodenberg had instantly liked and with which he had helped her to make her debut in the Deutsche Rundschau. Rodenberg, deeply moved about his friend's kindness and generosity, replied:

How can I thank you in a few words for such a present, which, because of the intention from which it originated and because of the hand which is offering it, is invaluablely precious to me. Profoundly moved I accept the "Lotti-watch", although it almost pains me to see you part from it. But you know what that gift means to me: it shall accompany me on the last stretch of my life's way and it will enhance every hour it is showing, by making me think of the great poet, whom to be allowed to call friend, I consider the crowning summit of my literary career (B II 196).

Rodenberg loved watches and clocks as much as Marie Ebner did. In 1896 the two friends met again at Rothenturmstrasse 27. This time Rodenberg brought his wife Justine and his daughter Alice along. After his visit he noted in his diary:

The most beautiful hours we spent Monday afternoon in the

old house of the Ebner-Eschenbachs, Rothenturmstrasse 27. It is so old that the octogenarian Fieldmarshall-Lieutenant has spent his childhood in it since his seventh year. In the very room where he once did his schoolwork we now smoked our cigars. The dinner was exquisite and very enjoyable. I sat beside Frau Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach and her companion (who is writing out the beautiful manuscripts) as I have seldom sat at a dinner. In her person are united the lady of high society, the lovable and attentive hostess, and the true friend. I could not help being moved looking at her fine white aristocrat's hand, the hand which had created so much beauty. Her good eyes, her face, every one of her movements were breathing benevolence. She was extraordinarily cordial towards Justine and Alice. The flowers they took from her table will never fade for them (B II 198).

In 1897 Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach dedicated her collection of stories Alte Schule to Rodenberg, and on the occasion of his seventieth birthday she gave him a second "Lotti-watch". To a Festschrift, which his friends published to honour the septuagenarian, she contributed a letter in which she concluded:

Much evil is reported about our small planet earth: but even the most convinced pessimist cannot deny that something very precious is growing on it: genuine, loyal friendship. Blessed is the life of everyone, who is feeling it and experiencing it, blessed is your life, my revered friend (B II 200).

Having read Marie Ebner's Kinderjahre in 1905 Rodenberg congratulated her on her achievement, adding that her description of her childhood had stimulated him to think and write now about his own. He, like Ebner-Eschenbach, was very attached to his home-town, but he had left it in order to make his career in Berlin. Thus, when he returned to Rodenberg as a septuagenarian he felt like a stranger. Although the scenery was still almost the same -- the hill he loved so much, the trees he had seen grow were now almost as old as he himself -- but he missed the people he had known in his childhood and youth. And as an old man Rodenberg realized that these people had been one of the reasons why he had been so

attached to the town and its scenery (Kindheit 59).

In 1907 Rodenberg published his autobiography Aus der Kindheit and dedicated it to his dear friend Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach. On reading it she may have noted how much more he had glorified his childhood as a "paradise" (57) and how much he had been integrated in a loving family, more than she could ever have hoped to be. In later years she recommended other writers to Rodenberg, among them Enrica von Handel-Mazzetti, by whose literary skills she had been deeply impressed. He then took great pains to discuss in an extensive correspondence the young writer's work -- especially her novella Die arme Margarethe, and to help her improve it technically. Enrica as well as Marie Ebner greatly appreciated Rodenberg's expertise and Ebner once wrote to her protégée:

Happy every writer who has, in the heat of creation, such an understanding person at his side. How must you have felt strengthened, encouraged after each one of his letters, confirmed in the belief in the success of your great work. Rodenberg of course is dealing with a unique person, but in his own way he is unique himself (Mumbauer 68).

And she added: "If it were possible to love Rodenberg even more than I love him already, it would be because of these letters" (ibid.).

Marie Ebner never forgot that she owed her recognition as a writer to the editor of the Deutsche Rundschau in Berlin. All her life she remembered that he had drawn her out of her anonymity and had helped her to assert herself as a novelist. Soon she would be acknowledged not only in Germany but in her home-country as well.

CHAPTER 4:

"THE SPIRIT THAT IS BLOWING"

Marie Ebner's fighter instinct and her determination had helped her so far to brave all adversaries on her path to literary recognition. She had pitted her will against relatives who tried to prevent her from writing, she had defied malicious critics whose rancorous reviews would have defeated a less determined soul. She had continued to write in spite of the sluggish sales of her books and despite rejections from editors of various journals. She had finally won a place as contributor to Rodenberg's Deutsche Rundschau, but she had yet to face another adversary. Her health, precarious since her infancy, caused her serious worries.

A look at Marie Ebner's diaries of the 1860's and 1870's shows how often she suffered from migraine caused by heat, too many social commitments, and by exhaustion following strenuous literary work. In May 1866 she complained: "Many people, great heat. I came home with such severe headaches that I could not write at all and had to spend all day being idle" (TB I 94). On April 6, 1867, shortly after she had sent her manuscript of Marie Roland to the printers, she entered in her diary: "Suffering a great deal, under very great strain. My head has to be given rest for a good while" (TB I 168). The next day she still complained about "wicked headaches all day long" (ibid.). Whenever she managed to steal a few hours from her busy schedule and to wholly concentrate on her literary work she had to pay later with "dreadful headaches" (TB I 240). On 13 January 1872 she complained of having had unbearable headaches for

three days, headaches that made her unable to think (TB II 85).

We have no medical report about the injuries Ebner-Eschenbach suffered when she tried to jump out of the window as a seven-year-old girl and hit her head against the windowframe. It is possible that she suffered a severe concussion which could have caused chronic headaches in later years. In Meine Kinderjahre she states that especially the heat in the city caused her unbearable discomfort: "A May day with summer temperatures, blissful in the country, in the city for me a breeder of headaches. They came violently, and when my parents wanted to go out in the forenoon, I asked to be left at home" (871). And in "Die arme Kleine" she has the narrator say about the protagonist:

She had reached her eighth year, grew in height but remained disquietingly tender and slim. There were not many days, when she did not suffer from headaches, but when it happened, she felt remunerated for a long time of suffering (661).

Throughout her youth Marie Ebner had lived under reprimand for her writing. Her headaches, therefore, may have been a psychosomatic symptom of suppressed anger against the relatives, who considered her creative impulse a sin (Horney 56). Later she was torn between a convention which demanded that she devote herself totally to caring for relatives and friends, and a vocation that needed time and concentration. She therefore may have developed a high state of tension which caused her headaches and many of the ailments that made life difficult for her. Trying to cope with her double life by rising early and working late must have brought her to a state of permanent near-exhaustion, that also may have caused her headaches. Something of how she felt under these conditions may have gone into the description of Bertram Vogel, the

protagonist of Bertram Vogelweid: "Sudddenly it felt as if an iron band was strangling his neck or as if a dagger pierced his ears, and then a roaring and humming started in his head, which made thinking a hellish torture" (4). Time and again Ebner-Eschenbach complained about feeling extremely unwell and being plagued by severe migraines after the completion of a stage play. It is obvious that each of her works at that time and in later years had been accomplished under great stress and a nagging guilt feeling on account of her relatives' discontent about her writing²⁵. Her headaches were essentially an expression of the conflict within her personality.

Marie Ebner also suffered from her demon, her urge to create. She knew that life would be easier in many ways, if she did not write, yet she had to give in to her literary passion. Her poem So ist es vividly expresses how much she felt enslaved by this "demon", in whose service she saw her whole being entrapped, deprived of the possibility to determine herself how she wanted to live:

The demon takes possession of your heart, steals your soul,
fills your whole thinking. You have only him, yea, your very
own life, your human erring, every emotion, your burning
compassion, hate, wrath and pain, your most quiet longing,
your most secret dream... everything bears the coinage of
one's service to him" (Paetel, 1901, vol.1, 179/80).

In April 1864 Marie Ebner had a chronic infection in three places of her back and had to undergo a water cure she hated. She noted in her diary: "Moriz accompanies me to the Zoo, because I am supposed to promenade during my cure, which up to now has had no other effect than to make me worse and insufferable" (TB I 32). Around this time she was also plagued by an ear problem that caused her great concern. In her diary we only

read: "Dr. Pollitzer treats my right ear that is going deaf" (TB I 37). But this entry belongs to those she revised in old age. Originally it most probably revealed her unhappiness about this tragic fact. As a young woman of thirty-four she must have been desperate to learn that she was about to lose her hearing in one ear. Three years later, resigned to her fate, she wrote in her diary: "I am suffering, my cure with Gruber is embarrassing; I am losing my hearing in the right ear. There is nothing to be done" (TB I 217). For a long time her right ear caused her great discomfort, especially since she was plagued by a constant buzzing which distracted her from her work (TB I 43).

Another great worry were her eyes. She often suffered from eye infections, when she could neither read nor write, and was therefore often in low spirits. To her friend Ferdinand von Saar she once wrote: "I am in a bad mood and morose, because my eyes are worse again. May you fare better! A poet should never be ill, he has already a hard enough life in this world" (Kindermann 77). Because of her eye problem she sometimes was prevented from attending theatre performances and was once particularly upset when she had to miss Paul Heyse's tragedy Don Juan (HC 272). Often she had to rely on friends to read to her. Once Paul Heyse sent her a collection of his latest novellas, and she had them read to her by the niece of Friedrich Halm. In her letter to Heyse she later wrote that the young lady read extremely well,

but nevertheless, every time she had come to the end of a story -- as deeply moved, as enthusiastic as I could have wished -- I longed for a tete-a-tete with my highly revered poet. Then I read for myself, I read and reread, and if it was not good for the bodily eyes, to whom reading had been interdicted, it did good to the mental eyes, which it sharpened, delighted and consoled (HC 279).

In another letter to Heyse she mentioned that the windows of her room had to be curtained in order to prevent light from entering the room and from damaging her weak eyes. Using a very apt metaphor she let Heyse know that "a brave heart always finds ways through ever so much suffering to break a path for a ray of sunshine, filled with pure joy" (HC 280) -- the ray of sunshine being Heyse's book, which she had just read.

Since she could not see very well she had to dictate her letters to friends, relatives and, in later years, to her secretary. But she was always unhappy about not being able to write herself. To her friend, Natalie von Milde, she once confided that, due to dictating a letter addressed to her, it had turned out so badly that she could not send it away and she continued: "Lately that happens to almost all of my letters; those that have been dictated in the evening cause me horror when I read them the next morning" (RV I.N. 129013). The more she suffered from her ailments, the more Marie Ebner appreciated her ability to day-dream and to create an imaginary world of her own. As she once observed:

Since the bad condition of my health restricts the possibility of serious and sustained occupation more and more, the joy one finds in the exercise of intellectual occupation appears to me in a wonderful light. I ask myself, what can the worst adversities do to us if we possess the magic wand that enables us to transpose ourselves at any time from this earthly misery into a world created by ourselves, in which we may rule according to beautiful and just laws (B II 108/9).

She often suffered from coughs and catarrhs, yet continued to smoke, not only cigarettes, but also heavy cigars. Little did she know at that time, that smoking reduces immune responses and increases the possibility of viral infections (Dunlop 81). When she travelled by train she immensely enjoyed sitting alone, smoking a cigar, and meditating (TB I 274). She never saw a connection between smoking and her throat problems.

At fifty-nine Marie Ebner suffered from exophthalmic goitre, a disease which may have been caused by emotional stress and which leads to nervous and intrapsychic disturbances (Wageman 501). In her diary of 3 March 1889 the patient noted: "I have Basedow's disease; Moriz told me today. Now I am supposed to seriously determine to lead the life of a patient and I promise to do it as soon as my work is completed" (Vesely 232). In spite of her illness, which caused her to be extremely tired, jumpy and restless, she thought only of her literary commitments.

Her most persistent ailment was, however, a very painful trigeminal neuralgia (tic douloureux) which doctors attributed to a long-standing anaemia (B II 156).²⁶ Yet it may also have been of psycho-somatic origin. Marie Ebner had mentioned "facial pains" for the first time in her diary of 1866 in connection with a cold she had caught during a visit to Swoika, where her sister Friederike's in-laws lived. She found this family gathering particularly strenuous and afterwards confided in her diary: "From 3 to 10 at Swoika. Say seven hours. This surpasses the strength of my talent for being agreeable" (TB I 126).

Stress and the fear of constant intrusions on her work may have affected Ebner-Eschenbach's nervous system to produce the infamous trigeminal neuralgia which would plague her for twenty-four years, causing her many sleepless nights and workless days. There were times when she could hardly speak (TB II 343).

Trigeminal neuralgia appears in involuntary, regularly repeated spasmodic contractions of a muscle, generally of neurotic origin, caused by anxiety, depression and phobias. It is characterized by a shooting, stabbing excruciating pain along the branches of the trigeminal nerve on

the skull in front of the ears. The disease is known to occur mainly in women in middle-age. Attacks are brief in the beginning, but as the disease progresses, the intervals between them decrease. Patients find it difficult to eat, drink or talk, since the areas around the mouth and nose are very sensitive and, when moved, may trigger a painful spasm. The cause of the disease is unknown and the only cure available today is surgery of the nerve in the vicinity of the ganglion (Wagman 673).

During times of physical suffering Marie Ebner had to curtail her social commitments, in fact she hardly received any visitors at all. As Ferdinand Saar writes in Die Gartenlaube about his friend:

She was forced, on account of increasing sickness, to withdraw by and by almost totally from social life; it was no longer easy to call upon her. During one of the few and short visits I was able to put in with her during many years, I was witness to the fortitude with which she mastered a severe bodily ailment she finally overcame mostly by unflinching will-power (504).

Visits to spas like Bad Reichenhall, Bad Nauheim, Bad Kissingen and Königswart did not bring Marie Ebner relief from her pain, and doctors were helpless against her "rebellious nerves" (B I 129). What ultimately helped her were strict rest, relief from those strenuous and nerve-racking social commitments and her determination to free herself from her painful condition.

In a sense her ailments were Ebner-Eschenbach's rebellion against the relentless demands of her social environment. They were a blessing in disguise, because they provided her with the long-desired desperately needed time to channel her energies into the field where she could develop herself: writing. She had paid too high a price for constantly being available to others and now had a valid excuse to give up some of her

irksome obligations. In a roundabout way her ailments helped Marie Ebner towards self-realization. They allowed her legitimately to keep interruptions of her literary work at bay, and they even compelled her to exercise her talent as the only worthwhile thing to do.²⁷ Her relatives thought her hypersensitive and fastidious and often criticized her for feeling sorry for herself (TB II 490). They did not realize that she used her ailments partly as an excuse to be left alone. Thus on November 29, 1874 Marie Ebner wrote in her diary: "All day in bed. Very diligent and so happy about this diligence" (TB II 302). When in 1889 she was very ill and craving to work peacefully on her novel Unsühnbar, her doctor and her relatives finally realized that work was the best therapy for her. As she wrote to Julius Rodenberg:

My excellent and wise doctor and my benevolent relatives took pity on me and allowed me to busy myself and realized that a gouty ant also drags materials to the hive, the completion of which is as much a concern to the poor thing as the establishment of a world empire is to any Napoleon (B II 132).

A year later, around her sixtieth birthday, Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach was finally able to write to her friend, Louise von François, that she felt better and that she might even be completely cured from her tic douloureux (B II 223).

Louise von François, a fellow writer, had a very special place in Marie von Ebner's life. Thirteen years her senior, von François was quite a prominent writer when the two women met for the first time in 1880. Contrary to Ebner-Eschenbach, Louise von François was, however, not obsessed by a demonic urge to write, but had taken to the pen only out of financial necessity. She once said to Paul von Szczepanski, editor of Velhagen und Klasings Monatshefte, that, if she had been able to earn

enough money by knitting stockings she would have preferred this to writing (Szczepanski 641).

Louise von François' ancestors had been Huguenot aristocrats from Southern France. After the abolition of the Edict of Nantes by Henry IV Etienne de François had moved to Prussia, where Huguenots were received with open arms by King Frederic II, due to their bravery and skills. While some members of the François family entered the cloth business, most entered the military service and became dedicated soldiers.

Through his marriage to Louise von Brück, a descendant of the famous chancellor Brück and of the painter Lucas Cranach the Elder, Louise von François' grandfather came into the possession of the country estate Niemegk. Her father, Friedrich von François, first served in the Saxon army, and in 1815 joined the Prussian military, because Niemegk was situated in a part of Saxony, which was given to Prussia around that time. A year later he married Amalie Hohl von Weissenfels. Unfortunately he died in 1818 at the age of only forty-six, leaving behind two very small children, Louise and her brother. A guardian, expected to look after the family's finances in order to assure a secure future for the children, failed them miserably. He sold Niemegk, lent the proceeds to insolvent clients and thus lost a considerable fortune, on which the family had depended as their only source of income.

Louise von François' mother remarried a year after her husband's death. District-court judge Herbst von Weissenfeld became a good stepfather to Louise and her brother and treated them like his own two sons, Bernhard and Arthur, who were soon added to the family. Yet financially the family was not well off. Louise never went to a public school, but



Louise von François

received some private lessons which particularly stimulated her interest in history. Due to her very vivid imagination she was able to visualize the life of prominent historical personages, who fascinated her so much, that she soon began to write dramas about their lives (Hartwig 459). Goethe was her model at that time and even in old age she read and re-read his works, trying to come to an ever better understanding of the master and his thoughts. The French writer George Sand also fascinated her, so that she copied whole pages from her novels (Hartwig 459).

Fortunately for Louise von François the Russian novelist Fanny Tarnow had moved from St. Petersburg to Weissenfels. Once a week she invited young people with literary interests to her house for reading and discussion of German, English and French literature. While Louise benefitted greatly from Fanny Tarnow's knowledge and love of literature, she also met at her place a Count G.W.²⁸ to whom she became engaged in 1838. Yet after the loss of her estate Count G.W., himself a man of rather modest means, had second thoughts about marrying an impoverished girl, and thus the engagement was dissolved. Soon afterwards the count, an officer in the Prussian army, left the military service and tried to find his luck in America (Hartwig 459). His ex-bride never married.

Invited by her uncle to become his daughter's companion, Louise moved to Minden, where she stayed until her uncle's death in 1855. Back in Weissenfels, she took care of her ailing parents, and it was at that time that she began writing fiction in order to add some money to the family's meager income. Ever since the loss of her inheritance she had lived in humble circumstances, which worsened, due to her aging parents' increasing ailments. But Louise never lost heart, modesty and

unpretentiousness being part of her nature. Her father also had been a very modest man who had asked his family to bury him in his soldier's coat and give the money, destined for a casket, to the poor instead (Hartwig 456).

Louise von François' "Potsdamer Skizzen" were instantly accepted by Hermann Hauff, editor of Cotta's Morgenblatt, who even asked her to become his collaborator on the staff of the journal (ELF 19). She had taken up her literary career without the knowledge of her parents and therefore had to write secretly. She worked slowly and meticulously. Her story of the Wars of Liberation, begun in the 1850s, was completed in 1870. Her novel Die letzte Reckenburgerin, which initially did not find a publisher and travelled as far as America, only to be returned to the author, was begun in 1863 and finally published in 1871.

This novel, called by von François "the grain of corn found by a blind hen" (B I 118), brought her the loyal and lasting friendship of Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach. The Austrian writer was so intrigued by this work of her North German colleague that she wrote to her, expressing her admiration for a great achievement. On April 12, 1875 Marie Ebner had already mentioned in her diary:

I have made the valuable acquaintance of the Letzte Reckenburgerin by Louise von François. Hillebrand in his history of literature calls this novel the best that has appeared lately. How right he is (TB II 336).

In 1880 she read the novel again and decided, in spite of her shyness, to approach people she did not personally know, to tell Louise von François how much she appreciated her work. In her essay in Velhagens und Klasings Monatshefte Marie Ebner describes how she overcame her bashfulness: "The spirit that is blowing in this book took me upon its

strong wings and carried me above all small-minded fear and care" (18). She used her best and most precious writing paper to contact her admired colleague. Yet later she learned that Louise von François, instead of being pleased with it, was taken aback, and had remarked to a friend: "How can one enter into a correspondence with someone who is writing on such paper?" (18). Fortunately Ebner-Eschenbach had included a volume of her aphorisms, so that von François felt obliged to reply and to thank her for it. In due course the two writers became fast friends.

Of their correspondence unfortunately only Louise's letters are extant. They reveal her interest in Marie Ebner's personality, in her life in Austria, and in her works, a copy of which she regularly received. Well versed in German, French and English literature, and endowed with a very critical mind, von François always carefully analyzed what she read and freely gave her opinion. Her aesthetic standards were high. She was not content with Andreas Muth's ("Ein Spätgeborener") tragic fate; in her view he should have lived out his life as a happy man (B I 113). She further had some objections to Bozena, whose heroine, "a figure of Shakespearean originality and depth" (B II 115), should have been more at the centre of the work. But she deeply admired Ebner's talent of characterization and clarity of thought and soon became the latter's valued advisor in matters regarding technique and form.

In June 1880 the two friends finally met personally in Bad Nauheim and found confirmed what they had so far only assumed: that they were kindred souls. From the beginning of her correspondence Marie Ebner knew that she had met a person of great honesty and integrity, since Louise had admitted in her first letter that she had never heard of her.

And Ebner-Eschenbach much appreciated that frankness. In her essay on Louise von François she later wrote:

This confession, made without inhibition and not very flattering for me, immediately gave rise to the feeling in me: here you are dealing with unconditional truthfulness. This feeling soon turned into conviction and became the firm and clear ground on which our friendship was built (19).

When she met von François, Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach was impressed by her tall, noble appearance and elegance in spite of her simple clothes and felt awe and compassion for the woman who bore her life of deprivation with such composure and dignity. In her diary of June 15 she mentioned how happy she was to have Louise with her, and how much she enjoyed her conversation. She learned how bravely her friend was coping with her financially restricted life and how hard she had found it to resume her normal routine after a severe illness. Deeply moved, Marie Ebner noted in another diary entry:

"It goes without saying, that she inspires in me reverence and a compassion, that borders on adoration" (B II 207).

Louise von Francois, likewise taken with her newly found friend, observed Marie Ebner's "wavy, silvery hair, her esprit, her eyes full of kindness and her native wit" (B I 123). From her correspondence with Marie Ebner she knew that the Austrian writer was different from others, who had written to her earlier, praising her literary accomplishments. In a letter to Ebner-Eschenbach she once wrote: "With you it was different at one stroke. Here I felt -- including the horror of cats --something familiar, even something motherly" (B I 118).

During those days in Bad Nauheim the two friends had ample opportunity to exchange ideas, to discover their common historical

interests, to express their likes and dislikes, while taking the waters at the famous spa. Marie Ebner soon discovered that Louise had eyes that did not only look but see, eyes "whose glance examined heart and mind, that seemed to possess their own light and that lit up when the vivacious genial woman waxed enthusiastic, whenever something provoked her admiration or her outrage" (ELF 20). Ebner learned from her friend, that unwittingly she had described the latter's life story in Lotti die Uhrmacherin, since she too liked to collect, if not watches, then pearls and goldnuggets. Ebner-Eschenbach for her part recognized the similarity between Louise von François and Hardine, the protagonist of Die Letzte Reckenburgerin, who both exemplified the strength of character and the spirit of generosity, she so greatly admired.

To Marie Ebner's great delight Louise was full of entertaining stories about people who had made a name for themselves in the literary world. About Fanny Lewald she said: "She is tall, tall, tall, but never forgets her umbrella" (B II 207). About Louise Brachmann she knew that "she had a number of love affairs, which were almost always one-sided, like the poor poet herself. Out of shame and despair over her unhappy, passionate nature she once threw herself out of the window and made many an attempt at suicide" (ibid.).

Louise also had met the famous dramatist Adolf Müllner personally in Weissenfels and knew an anecdote about a rehearsal of his play Die Schuld: Miss Kunze in the part of Elvira was supposed to sink to the floor next to a harp, yet could not accomplish this feat to Müllner's satisfaction. He requested her repeatedly to try again. Finally she became impatient and told him off, while letting herself drop to the floor, whereupon Müllner

shouted: "My Lady, you talk like a goose, but you glide down like an angel" (B II 208).

The two friends spent many an hour discussing their own and other writers' works, and Louise von François always showed a clear and informed judgement. Towards her own works she was so rigorously critical, that Marie von Ebner called her "an enhanced Brutus, because he only judged his children, whereas she defamed hers" (ELF 20). Ebner-Eschenbach found the time with Louise so enjoyable that she wrote in her diary on the day of her departure from Bad Nauheim: "Fräulein von François left today. I feel quite impoverished after parting from this great personality" (B II 207). During the summer of 1881 the two friends, by now on first name terms, met again, this time in Bad Reichenhall in Upper Bavaria, where they were looking forward to resume their literary discussions. Marie Ebner's diary entry of June 23, 1881 reveals how eagerly she had expected Louise:

The clock strikes one, now the train, that is supposed to take L.v.François here to Reichenhall, starts to move. At 2.30 p.m. she had arrived. She had departed earlier from Munich than she had told me, so that I did not have to bother meeting her at the train station (B II 208).

The two vacationers had such a good time in Bad Reichenhall, that they promised each other to meet there again the following year. This time Marie Ebner had also invited her brother Viktor and his wife Rosine, who both were happy to meet the famous author of Die letzte Reckenburgerin. Louise again spoke freely about her work and also encouraged Marie Ebner to continue writing. She persuaded Marie Ebner to send the manuscript of Margarete to Rodenberg for his Deutsche Rundschau, where some of her own works had been published, and wrote a warm recommendation (B II

209).

Marie Ebner for her part also tried to further Louise's career and discussed plans with her for the performance of her historical comedy Der Posten der Frau, adapted from her 1886 novella of the same name. Eventually she also managed to provide a prize for Louise from the Schillerstiftung for that very comedy (B II 265). During this stay in Bad Reichenhall Louise von François' two novellas Phosphorus Hollunder and Zu Füßen des Monarchen appeared and almost daily she received letters from fans and admiring colleagues. One day she proudly showed Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach a letter by the Swiss writer Conrad Ferdinand Meyer, who called himself "your colleague in the Rundschau" wishing he also were her "colleague in talent" (ELF 27). From then on C.F.Meyer became Louise von François' friend and a regular correspondent, whose letters enriched the last years of her life. He likewise treasured his acquaintance with her and highly valued her judgement in literary questions. On a trip to Switzerland she once made a stop-over in Zürich and spent some time with him at his estate in Kilchberg on Lake Zürich (ELF 27). She also told him about Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach, whom she considered the "most intelligent and most thoughtful woman, who ever wrote in Germany" (B II 8). But the Swiss writer never contacted his Austrian colleague, probably because he realized that in temperament and Weltanschauung they stood too wide apart.

Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach and Louise von François again made the most of their vacation in Bad Reichenhall. They both immensely enjoyed the beautiful, mountainous scenery and daily went on outings, which sometimes took them as far as Berchtesgaden, another famous tourist spot. They also

participated in the social life of the town. Once they were invited to attend a piano examination and a choir concert at the convent. In the end the priest had to give a speech, which was obviously a bit of a problem for him. Marie Ebner found the event so amusing that she recorded it in her diary:

At first [the priest] praised the administrators of the institution, then he turned to the students of the convent saying: "But you also have looked upon this year (pause) as a receptacle, which you are supposed to fill up (pause) with the works of your diligence".

And she continued: "It was an embarrassing moment for me, I fought with an almost insurmountable urge to laugh. I am often deaf, why did my ear not let me down during this speech ?" (B II 210).²⁹ On another outing it happened that a big cat crossed the tourists' way and quickly vanished again. Marie Ebner later reported in her diary: "Louise was totally besides herself. She clasped her hands and ran ahead of us into the house. We heard her wail and cry loudly" (B II 209).

By her own admission Louise von François had an invincible horror of cats. It had increased so much over the years, that she even shied away from looking at pictures of cats, because they inspired her with extreme fear, although personally she had never had any bad experiences with these animals (Szczepanski 642). In Weissenfels she had a spacious tower-study next to her kitchen, living room and bedroom, yet never used it in the summer out of fear that a cat might come in (ibid.). She recognized her fear of cats as a weakness, that, although condemned rationally, she could not overcome. In her last book Der Katzenjunker she tried to analyze this fear and later confessed: "The 'Katzenjunker', that is me" (B I 117).

Nobody understood her better than Marie Ebner, who likewise since her childhood suffered from an indescribable fear of cats. In her autobiography she would later report how much, as a child, she detested those

murderers of birds, with the inaudible step, the repulsively soft movements, the false phosphorescent eyes. I shuddered when I saw them, hands and feet turned into icicles, my whole body was shaking, when my brothers and sisters brought a kitten into the house (MK 795).

Yet she also recalls that, driven by her conscience and vanity, she once saved a cat from drowning in a tub filled with water, a feat that left her trembling with fright (MK 796). And in a letter to Hieronymus Lorm she once wrote: "The only one of God's creatures which I hate, the cat, tortures the poor mouse to death with its most delicate and most graceful movements" (BF 68).

Fear of cats may be part of a larger psychoneurosis. It could be attributed to the frustration of infantile sexual drives or to a general insecurity in childhood. Louise von François as well as Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach had both experienced many losses and worries during their formative years. Both of them may, however, also have heard gruesome stories about cats from their nursemaids and nannies. The attributes, described by Ebner-Eschenbach in her autobiography, the soft predator's gait, the glowing phosphorescent eyes, are responsible for the fact that cats, in popular belief, were often associated with demons, magicians and witches, whose helpers they were supposed to be in their devilish undertakings or in whose disguise these demons appeared. Many a ghost story deals with cats who hurt people and who bring bad luck and death in their wake (Hoffmann-Kayser 1107).

As Marie Ebner mentions in Meine Kinderjahre cats were generally not tolerated in the yard and even killed by the gardener because they caused harm to birds (797). Due to her great love for her winged friends Marie Ebner considered cats as natural enemies and in several stories she describes them as that. Thus in "Der Fink" the cat is described as moving about "like a velvet snake" and approaching Pia, the protagonist, "on its elastic paws". She is holding a young finch in her hands and takes great care to protect it from the vicious beast of prey, which looks at her "again and again as if to say: 'I still don't have the right victim, you are keeping it from me. Just wait, I'll get it, I'm strong, I have claws'" (Harriman 99).

In Ebner's family her fear of cats must have been proverbial, so much so, that her husband Moritz teased her with it by having the narrator in his story Hypnosis perennis mention that he knows a lady who once came to Paris and could not sleep all night because she suspected a cat in the adjacent room (30). He was clearly referring to his wife, who had visited him in Paris during the World Exposition in 1867 (TB I 174).

Their common fear of cats must have been a regular topic of conversation between Louise von François and her Austrian friend. In a letter to Enrica Handel-Mazzetti Marie Ebner would later write: "O, Louise was precious! She always made fun of herself, and when I told her: 'Your eloquent, your genial eyes' -- she retorted: 'My cat eyes'" (Mumbauer 35). The friendship between these two cat-haters lasted for thirteen years, until von François' death.

Marie Ebner, aware of her friend's precarious financial state, went out of her way to help her without hurting her pride. Every Christmas she sent Hungarian wine to Weissenfels where Louise von François spent the

last years almost as a recluse. She had the need, like Marie Ebner, for being alone and for being left undisturbed.

Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach also was instrumental in getting a pension for Louise from the "Schillerfund" which her friend, instead of using it for herself, put aside for her young officer nephew to whom she wanted to leave an inheritance. Once Marie Ebner asked Paul von Szczepanski to visit Louise in her garret in Weissenfels under the pretext of asking for a literary contribution from her for Velhagen und Klasing's Monatshefte. Ebner-Eschenbach had read in the papers an exaggerated essay about Louise von François' impoverished life and wanted to find out through Szczepanski how much truth there was in that report. He returned with the conviction that Louise, however simple her life, did not suffer poverty but rather was by nature a frugal person (Szczepanski 642). Like Marie Ebner she had the talent to escape from the narrowness of her surroundings by creating her own imaginary world. Instead of travelling to Italy, her lifelong, unfulfilled dream, she read for a whole winter about the history of Rome and found the greatest pleasure in it.

Marie Ebner could not but admire Louise's ability to cope with life and to preserve her humour and optimism. In her diary of July 9, 1881 she had already written: "I often think Louise von François has been hammered into ore by the hand of fate, whereas I have crumbled in it" (B II 209)). For Marie Ebner this friendship with the German author was invaluable. To discuss her work with Louise and to listen to her well-meant criticism helped her to grow as a writer. In 1883 the two writers met for the third and last time in Bad Reichenhall and henceforth kept in touch by correspondence. In 1887, on the occasion of Louise von François'

seventieth birthday, Marie Ebner collected a hundred signatures from the most prominent Austrian authors and patrons of art for an album she sent to her friend as a special token of appreciation (B II 210).

Meanwhile Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach herself had become quite renowned in her country. In 1881, Ebhardt in Berlin had published a volume called Neue Erzählungen, containing her works "Ein kleiner Roman", "Die Freiherren von Gemperlein", "Lotti, die Uhrmacherin" and "Nach dem Tode". The last named novella had been completed in 1877 and was first accepted for serialisation by Blumenthal, who considered it her best story since "Ein Spätgeborener" (B II 162). Hieronymus Lorm likewise admired the work and wrote: "I bow in reverence before the glimmer of the eternal, that fell into your soul" (ibid.). Laube, too, wrote to her on June 18, 1877, expressing his delight with "Nach dem Tode" and complimented her for the detail of description and the excellent character sketching:

Please permit me, dear friend, to tell you that I have just read with great pleasure your "Nach dem Tode" and enjoyed it. How well you know the life in the salons as well as in the country. The latter with a -- for me surprising -- knowledge of things down to the thistles and the hounds, dozing in their dreams. How much to the point is the characterization, how most natural and most intelligent is the dialogue. Thekla, I think, is a master-piece. The quite unexpected turn towards the end prepares for a moving poetic edifice - I wish you and us luck for it (B I 153).

Two years later, in 1883, the publishing house Gebrüder Paetel eagerly accepted Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach's stories "Der Kreisphysikus", "Krambambuli", "Jakob Szela", "Die Poesie des Unbewussten" and "Die Resel" and brought them out under the title Dorf- und Schlossgeschichten. In 1884 Marie Ebner finally achieved the desired breakthrough in Austria. Her story "Komtesse Muschi", published in the Wiener Illustrierte Zeitung conquered the hearts of her compatriots (Necker 48). The "little tree of

[her] talent" was beginning to bear fruit.

NOTES:

1. Ernst Kris points out in Psychoanalytic Explorations in Art that writing is problem-solving for an author. He also holds that no artist can "divest his work of the personal component". Yet the artist has to refashion the problems of his own life, in order to create a work that can stand separate from him (253/4).

Doris Lessing alludes to writing as therapy in The Golden Notebook, where her protagonist says: "I had to 'name' the frightening things ... making past events harmless by naming them, but making sure they were still there" (616).

2. In her letter of 28 May 1878 to the "Herren Hohenhausen" Marie Ebner mentioned that the accomplishments she had achieved with her stories were "the fruits of resignation" (Schmidt 304).

Grillparzer did not share Ebner-Eschenbach's notion that the novel was inferior to drama. In a diary entry of 1839 he maintained: "Every good novel can be transposed into verses; it really is an undeveloped poetical subject..." He also articulated the difference between drama and novella in a very poignant way: "This is the essential difference between novella and drama: the novella is a thought out possibility, the drama is a thought-out reality". Twenty years earlier Schleiermacher in his Ästhetik had emphasized the closeness of story and drama. "The essence of poesie is also here the sensual representation of intuition of the truth of nature; insofar as a story must always have a so-called dramatic point, it moves away from the epic and close to drama (Pohlheim, Novelle 23).

3. It is possible that Ebner-Eschenbach wrote "Ein Edelmann" in order to teach her brother a lesson, since later she conceived the fairy tale Hirzepinzchen for her nephew Franz Dubsky for the same reason (Franz Dubsky, "Erinnerungen" 17). According to J. Winter (Der Adel) it was considered vulgar to deal with money and therefore aristocrats never carried cash with them (228). Yet Adolph Dubsky was not the first to enter the banking business. In 1848, Prince Felix von Hohenlohe-Oehringen entered the Darmstädter Bank and since then many aristocrats followed his example (Winter 229).

4. Bettelheim calls them the "diary of the soul" (B II 36).

5.5. Ebner-Eschenbach incorporated some of these maxims in her first prose work Aus Franzensbad and would later regularly use them in her works.

6. Johannes Klein aptly remarks about Ebner-Eschenbach's aphorisms: "Only someone who has seen abysses can formulate like this, someone who has himself gone through such abysses, and on those paths, which he has left behind long ago, he was alone" (Winkler edition, Gemeindekind, Novellen, Aphorismen, 970).

7. Dr. Eduard Hanslick, to whom Marie Ebner had sent a copy of her aphorisms, called the book "a goldmine of wisdom, goodness and insight into human beings, on which one draws again and again with pleasure" (RV I.N. 56472). Ebner-Eschenbach also sent a copy to Elisabeth, Princess of Saxony, who had visited her in Vienna (RV I.N. 61235).

8. It is interesting to note that Marie Ebner claims in her letter of June 5, 1878 to Hieronymus Lorm, that "thank goodness only in Germany" works by women writers are treated with disdain (BF 71).

9. She raced with the boys, liked to play priest and preferred male roles when performing her own stage works.

10. See Ernst Kris, Psychoanalytic Explorations in Art where he discusses "aesthetic creation" as "a type of problem-solving behaviour" (40).

11. Note that the name of Marie Ebner's maternal ancestors was Kaschnitz von Weinberg.

12. That Ebner-Eschenbach was preoccupied with the implications of the term "bluestocking" may be seen from the fact that she applied it several times herself. In her letter of 3 March 1875 to Devrient she refers to herself as "a dangerous bluestocking" (B II 318) and in her letter of 27 January 1894 she calls herself "an old bluestocking" (Kindermann 93). She further uses the term in several of her works to ridicule girls who enjoy writing ("Muschi" 310) and have an interest in learning ("Paula" 333). Finally, she wrote a poem Saint Peter and the Bluestocking, in which a woman, who calls herself a "blue stocking", finds entry into heaven despite Saint Peter's initial reservations (Paetel, 1901, vol.1, 173/4).

13. Compare to Marie Ebner's description of her father: "What was missing was balance and the delicate understanding for the happenings in the souls of those who were closest to him" (MK 770).

14. Heidi Beutin interprets Bozena as a symbol of the matriarchate (252).

15. There was one very negative review in the Neue Preussische Kreuzzeitung which objected to Ebner-Eschenbach's alluding to biblical phrases. The writer also blamed her for caricaturing some of her characters (RV folder 77234).

16. As Marie Ebner wrote to Lorm (BF 72).

17. Many aristocrats therefore used pseudonyms. Thus Freiherr von Hardenberg wrote under the name "Novalis", Graf von Auersperg under the pseudonym "Anastasius Grün", Nikolaus Edler von Strehlenau used the pen name "Nikolaus Lenau". This custom is being continued even today. The person behind "Barbara Ritter" is Gräfin Waltraud von Einsiedel, "Elisabeth Plessen" in real life is a Gräfin von Holstein (Winter, Der Adel, 190).

18. The Gemperlein dynasty much resembles the ancestors of the Dubsky family (275). Ebner's brother Viktor as a young boy gave already proof of his pugnaciousness by smacking his teacher during a lesson, and Marie, as a true Dubsky, envied him for having performed "the deed of which I was dreaming" (KL 274/5).

19. Critics in Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach's time first and foremost saw the humorous aspects of the work, envisioning it as a comedy performed on stage (B II 7). Modern critics, while still able to appreciate Ebner's humour, have focussed more on the fact that the author portrays the two "Gemperlein" as symbols of an aristocracy doomed to lose its power. Elisabeth Endress rightly points out that Ebner-Eschenbach's novella really deals with the same theme as Grillparzer's Ein Bruderzwist im Hause Habsburg. Yet, whereas in Grillparzer's work the end is bloody, in Marie Ebner's story humour mitigates "the halfheartedness of a life which was already rife for its demise when it began" (124). Danuta Lloyd focusses on the two noblemen's "humiliating condescension", their "cruelty to animals" and observes that Ebner-Eschenbach does not see them fit to continue the feudal tradition (37). Johannes Klein also sees the two brothers as representatives of the old, feudal Austria" which was unable to solve its problems (I, 382). Finally, Agatha Bramkamp, in her feminist interpretation, points towards the brother Gemperleins' self-delusion. "The whole story revolves around the male psyche with its distorted sense of reality -- symbolized in the brother's misuse of time and their disrespect for space -- and their imagined world where women are invented and obliterated freely" (108).

20. Compare to Lotti, die Uhrmacherin, where Lotti thinks: "Yes, my watches -- they will make dying hard for me" (866).

21. According to Otto Rank "one means of salvation from this total absorption in creation is ... the division of attention among two or more simultaneous activities" (Myth 204). He claims that such an occupation often is "an antithesis in style and character for the first, though it may be a continuation at another level" (ibid.). By way of a parallel it might be mentioned that Goethe had an interest in the natural sciences, Schiller in philosophy, Keller in painting. In Rank's view, if such a "second form of artistic achievement is missing, periods of disappointment, depression and even illness are likely to occur, which are then not so much a consequence of exhaustion as a flight from it" (ibid.).

22. As the Prussian diplomat Varnhagen von Ense noted, the young generation is hostile to all idealistic endeavour and "rushes headlong toward brutal reality and ... will soon accept nothing that is not concerned with material needs and pleasures" (Mann 122).

23. Compare to the ninth letter of Schiller's Aesthetical Essays, where he claims that art has saved mankind that has lost its dignity (57).

24. Joseph von Weilen found the novella "too wild, too elementary" (B II 169) and Rodenberg may have felt the same. Yet the work was translated into French and accepted in 1879 by the journal Révue de France (B II 169)

25. Even in later years Ebner-Eschenbach was not free of this guilt feeling. To Rodenberg she once wrote: "The way I write one does not write for a long time. Imagine that it almost always happens with a heartbreaking fear of an interruption, very often also with qualms of conscience, because this or that obligation is being neglected (B II 193).

26. Her anaemia was so bad, that she once fainted in the train on her trip to Trpist (TB I 268).

27. In "Aus einem zeitlosen Tagebuch" Marie Ebner writes from experience when stating: "How so many a woman writer, who has done good and even lasting work, can say about herself: 'I could only work when I had nothing else to do'" (731).

28. Hartwig does not disclose the count's full name (459).

29. In German "to fill a receptacle" is ambiguous. Marie Ebner obviously interpreted it as relating to a chamber-pot.