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Translation by Kenneth Kronenberg

Self-Education for Death For the Fatherland

(Selbsterziehung zum Tod fürs Vaterland. Amelangsverlag, 1915)

by

Udo Kraft

The following diary entries written by my dear brother over a span of 28 years should by rights speak for themselves. The publisher, however, was keen for a few introductory remarks. The reader who seeks bare biographical information on the author is directed to pages 22ff and 40ff, where he will find what he is looking for. And to those who are inclined to think that this slim volume is apocryphal—which one need hardly fear from a perceptive and understanding reader—I wish to assure you that everything has been copied verbatim from the papers he left behind. Neither the writing style of the young student and adolescent nor the turns of phrase colored by the local “upper Hessian” dialect have been tampered with. The fact that a “whole” emerges from the fragments results entirely from the author’s consistency of character, the trajectory of his path, and the single-mindedness with which he pursued his self-education.

Quedlinburg, Christmas 1914

Dr. Fr. Kraft

### **Entries from the diaries of a 16-year-old**

I will in this book henceforth record all that I encounter and, whenever I am moved to do so, my own thoughts. I will do this so that I might derive pleasure from it in the future, but also that I may account for my actions and doings, and to clarify my own thinking. I hope that I will continue to use it diligently, and that it will be useful and bring me pleasure.

New Year's Eve, 1886/87

I do not know why I so seldom feel truly contented. There is always something missing. That I definitely feel—something big that I can hold on to, something that will influence everything that I do and think, something that will give my life direction. I have felt this way for many years; exactly when it started I cannot say, but I feel quite distinctly the desire and necessity, and it has become a vague certainty that something must happen to channel my life onto a particular path. — Sometimes I seem to be contented. This is almost always the case when I become conscious of having used my time in earnest, particularly when I have done my duty, when I have accomplished or made something... But then I again get this disquieting, anxious feeling. At these times I ask myself, “What is your purpose in the world? — To work, earn your daily bread, and enjoy life? No, that cannot be why you are here.” At these times another thought suggests itself, one that I have also found in Cicero's “Pro archia poeta” and “Pro milone”: I want to accomplish something great so that my name will not die along with my body, but will live on. — Earlier in life I had this thought quite frequently, but I always rejected it. Now I think I have figured it out. I want to be a good and noble man. I want to strive for self-respect, to become conscious of my own inner substance. I will ask only such people what they think of me whom I respect. My ideal is to become a true, loyal German man...

### **Diary entry**

Friday, 29 July 1887.

...I really can't agree when some of my friends state with such certainty that the fraternity will be resurrected in its old glory. A whole other spirit will have to reign among us before that happens. Who knows: perhaps the German Volk will have to suffer another defeat at the hands of our archenemies before this spirit is revived. *That* I would love to see. I would gladly give up the best year of my life to experience such an exalted time when the German Volk rises up, when each man stands resolute for his Fatherland. How gladly would I give my life to that end! — But, I fear that this time has passed, never to return.

### **From a composition in which the assignment was to compare the *Nibelungenlied* to Homer's *Odyssey***

Summer semester 1887.

...In this, the forthright, bold and true hero of the Nibelungen saga embodies an ideal completely different from that of the “nimble, cunning Odysseus,”\* who not infrequently lies and cheats to achieve his purpose when brute force fails. Such behavior did not go against the grain of the Greek Volk; on the contrary, they took delight in their hero's facile lies and glib talk.\*□ The ancient Germans would have despised such a man. Openness and forthrightness of spirit, unbounded courage, and steadfast loyalty: these are the ideal virtues of our ancient German heroes. These are the characteristics that have preserved the German Volk through the centuries up until this day, and which will continue to preserve it forever.\*□□

### **Diary entry**

Saturday, 13 August 1887.

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□ Teacher's marginal comment: “Where did the writer get this?”

□\* Marginal comment: “Is this the writer's own intellectual property?”

□\*\* Marginal comment next to a large question mark: “What empty talk from the mouth of the professed writer!” – The overall assessment of the teacher, who was also Klassenführer [similar to a modern homeroom teacher with overall responsibility for the students], was as follows: “The ‘writer’ has dealt with a completely wrong subject, and toward the end he develops thoughts that could not possibly represent his own intellectual property: [Grade] IV. Editor's note: he was apparently supposed to have drawn on the entire Nibelungenlied instead of just the first book (Gesang)].

...My grades really are a dreary sight! If only I understood what it all means, whether I can even manage it. Since Easter I have done my duty to the fullest extent possible, and still...it really must have to do with a lack of ability. What will ever become of me? — I have often contemplated that if war is unavoidable, O that it may come now! Gladly would I die an honorable death on the battlefield for my beloved German Fatherland. Then I would have amounted to something, and my life would not have been in vain. May Heaven prevent only one thing: that I should go through life a cripple. — But before I took to the field in this sacred battle for freedom and Fatherland, I would bid farewell: “If I do not return, I ask that you remember me occasionally, and if I have the good fortune to rest in the cemetery in my native town, place a flower on my grave now and then.” — If I knew that, I would take to the field against Germany’s archenemy, and be prepared to bleed and to die. — These are all idle fantasies, and who knows whether this day will ever arrive. But if it does, I want to be among the first to take up the sword to protect our “sacred marchlands.”

**Conclusion of a story titled “Johannes” sent to his parents for Christmas 1887**

...Restlessly have I crisscrossed the country since then. I tried to forget my pain, but with no success; I sought death, but to no avail. The world that I once thought was Paradise now seems desolate and cheerless, and this tired, wounded heart yearns for peace....

Alarums of war filled the world. Our archenemy had invaded German land, but the German Volk rose up as one man. Bloody battles were fought; many who had joyfully placed their lives at the service of the Fatherland fell in battle, but victory was achieved.

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In a distant valley was a grave surrounded by pasture. The inscription reads:

Hier ruht Johannes, ein Spielmann,  
Der gleich tapfer stritt mit Schwert und Fiedel.  
Er starb den Heldentod fürs Vaterland

Here rests Johannes, a minstrel,  
Who fought the brave fight with sword and fiddle.  
He died a hero's death for the Fatherland.

### **Diary entry**

Sunday, 22 January 1888.

My beloved mother has died and left us all bereft....None of us begrudged her release from her terrible sufferings, which she bore like a heroine; nor did we cry for her, but for ourselves, whom she left behind. A spirit of such grandeur inhabited that poor, weak body that we may all look to her in admiration and say, "This was our mother!" I know that I was never worthy of her, but I will try to become worthy. I want to carry her image in my heart at all times, and whatever I do, I will ask, "What would she have said?" Perhaps then I will over time vanquish what is bad in me, and become a good person, a man. That is what my father said to me at her deathbed: "Become a man!" That is my desire. And my mother will stand by me.

### **Diary entries**

Tuesday, 24 January 1888

In the evening after I finish my schoolwork, I have been preoccupied with the polar expedition, which has always interested me.

Saturday, 4 February 1888.

...The lecture yesterday by Capt. Bade, the Arctic explorer, was truly magnificent. He described the sinking of the *Hansa* and life on a 270-square-meter ice floe in a hut made of briquettes, the horrors of the winter night, and the indescribable suffering that they endured, their Christmas and New Year celebrations. — The fourteen men up there had no prospect of salvation on that drifting ice floe amid the cold, storms, and loneliness of that region. Death was with them always, threatening in many forms. Yet these men never for a moment forgot that they were Germans, and they proved

themselves worthy of their nation. Even later, during those horrible moments when the ice floe broke apart and their hut was destroyed, when they were without shelter and exposed to the most horrific storms and faced death by starvation, the thought of what they owed their Volk gave them the courage to live, though that life was full of the most terrible suffering. But in the end they received their just reward. Capt. Bade concluded with the hope that it might be the German nation that would one day solve the great problem of the North. — My spirits were uplifted. I thought to myself, “If only I could dedicate my life in this way to the service of my Fatherland. If only I could through a harsh life filled with privation contribute to the fulfillment of this courageous German man’s aspiration! — I doubt that I will be blessed to show in this way what my Fatherland means to me. But I intend to work with all my strength for its welfare, even in the narrow sphere of life that may one day be mine.

### **From a speech given during the graduating students’ carousal<sup>1</sup>**

#### **Diary entry**

19 March 1891.

...For many years we have faithfully shared the joys and trials of student life. We have stood faithfully by each other, and we grumbled like all downtrodden students when forced to learn the ancient Greeks and Romans, and the mathematical formulas that made our lives a misery. Together we also paid homage from time to time to the god Gambrinus, and a healthy and cheerful student sense of humor was always welcome. — Those times are now past, and we must part ways. Some of you will leave this city to serve the Fatherland with unsheathed sword in foreign lands. Others will stay. They will set a colored cap on their heads and drape a sash across their chests—different caps, different sashes. And so we will set out on our various paths with all their differing perspectives on things. And the more we step out into life, and the more the individual develops, the more divergently will our perspectives evolve, and the more alien will we seem to each other. — But we must solemnly vow never to think less of one another on that account. Let us always keep each other in kind remembrance. And—thank God—there is one point at which all of our aspirations and actions converge. I hope that this is

true of us all: that our striving is not merely for the benefit of our own insignificant selves, but above all for our beloved Fatherland. A patriotic poet expressed these thoughts beautifully:

Trennt uns Glauben, Streben, Meinen,  
Eins soll immer uns vereinen;  
Brüder reicht euch froh die Hand:  
Deutschlands Freiheit, Deutschlands Einheit  
Und in ihrer schönsten Reinheit  
Liebe für das Vaterland!<sup>ii</sup>

Though beliefs, strivings, and opinions divide us,  
One thing will forever unite us.  
Brothers, joyfully reach out your hand:  
Germany's freedom, Germany's unity,  
And in its most lovely purity  
Love for the Fatherland!

Wherever Germans are gathered, regardless of how differently they think and strive, they are conscious that they are as one in this: their love for their Fatherland!...

### **From a speech commemorating the restoration of the German Reich**

Written on 16 January 1892.

Twenty-one years have passed since the German Reich was restored. The dream glimpsed but dimly by the bards of the wars of German independence, the dream that filled with deep longing the breast of a man like Schenkendorf,<sup>iii</sup> the dream that inspired the German fraternities for 50 hard and dark years; that dream has been fulfilled more beautifully than one would have dared to hope: the German Reich was founded, powerful in its dealings with the world, united within its own borders...

In 1871 when the German Reich was restored, the opinion was often expressed that the fraternities had outlived their usefulness as their ideals had now been realized—the fraternities were no longer needed. Such opinions are still expressed.

What did the old fraternities aspire to?

They aimed to ennoble youth, to awaken in them a sense of the highest good of humankind: freedom, honor, and Fatherland. They strove by thorough spiritual and physical training to make our youth capable of serving the Fatherland with all the powers at their disposal. Well, this task is still a valid one for the fraternity movement of today, perhaps even more so than ever. And on this anniversary of the founding of the German Reich we, its sons, solemnly vow willingly and joyfully to allow the fraternity to teach us to follow the path that it has set out for us with the words: Freedom, Honor, Fatherland. We must strive to maintain a clear view of the whole, unclouded by prejudice, and not to live our lives merely for the benefit of our own insignificant selves. Let the beautiful years that have been granted us to spend at the university be dedicated to serious struggles for spiritual and physical progress, so that these words may apply to us as well:

Glühend für Wissenschaft,  
Blühend in Jugendkraft,  
Sei Deutschlands Jüngerschaft  
Ein Bruderbund!<sup>iv</sup>

Ardent for knowledge  
Blossoming with the vigor of youth,  
May Germany's youth  
Be a band of brothers!

Today we solemnly vow to be fraternity members in this sense.

**From a speech on the occasion of a fraternity Christmas carousal**

December 1893.

...Today we celebrate Christmas with song and the clanking of flagons. We are gathered around a lighted Christmas tree surrounded with amusing gifts. But let us not forget that Christmas also has a more serious meaning for us. It celebrates the birth of that purest and most noble of teachings: love thy neighbor as thyself. But more: serve your neighbor and abjure yourself—kill the egoism within you that all human beings inherit. In short, become a moral person. That is the core of Christ's teachings. — We must heed this exhortation today as well, my dear brothers. We, too, should love our neighbors, and not merely our family members, friends, and fraternity bothers. No, we should have a warm and open heart for all of humankind, with all their joys and sorrows. We must not merely consider how we will earn our daily bread, and then once we have it consume it in peace and think, "Let the world out there fare as it will; I have a roof over my head." No, we must celebrate and grieve with mankind, and work and make progress with it. — But this doctrine demands even more of us: we must also serve mankind. True, we are not yet able to offer much in the way of direct service; but indirectly, as we are now engaged in preparing ourselves to serve. For this reason, let us train earnestly and unflinchingly our inner and outer person so that one day we will stand in life as complete men, ready to take up our professions and thereby contribute our bit to the progress of the whole. That thought is also contained in the word "Fatherland" in our motto: that through which we become able to work for the whole.

This is the message of Christmas for us students and fraternity brothers. — May this message never fade, but find a permanent place in our hearts, may our fraternity always send capable people out into the world. Let us now empty our flagons!'

**From a biography in the archives of the association of former members of the  
Arminia fraternity, Giessen**

Written down winter 1898.

...My student years were the most beautiful and happiest time of my life, and I wouldn't trade their memory for all the treasures of the world. Several circumstances contributed to this. For one thing, three members of my family were members of

Arminia: my brother, a foster-brother, and a cousin,<sup>vi</sup> along with myself. My father and sisters admired our ideals and showed interest in the doings of our fraternity. My father, who during his student years had been under the strict supervision of his father, simply let me do whatever I wanted. And even though he wasn't able to give me a great deal of pocket money, I was nonetheless a happy student with my three marks per week and occasional extras. There were only a few of us in the fraternity, but our earnest endeavors to realize our ideals, even if only within our small circle, united us. I think I may say without self-conceit that we practiced all aspects of fraternity life seriously (academic evening, fraternal meetings, carousing, fencing, and gymnastics). We lived simply and managed our finances frugally, and each of us placed the good of the fraternity as a whole above his personal desires and interests. We were always sincere and honorable amongst ourselves, even if action occasionally lagged behind intention. — In the process we faithfully cultivated the joys that German student life in its unique way offers those who wish to taste of the “shimmering abundance of life.”... I stood for the examination in March 1896 and was granted the certificate of qualification to teach history, geography, and German to the upper classes, and Latin to the lower classes. On 1 October 1896, I enlisted in the 116th Infantry Regiment (Kaiser Wilhelm) (2nd Grand-Duchy of Hessen) as a volunteer serving for one year. I was promoted to Corporal during regimental maneuvers, and was made Reserve Lieutenant after successfully completing the qualifying examination. At the time of my practicum at the Gymnasium in Giessen, I took part in my first bimonthly maneuvers and was promoted to Reserve Vice-Sergeant Major. Since September 1898 I have taught at the Höhere Bürgerschule in Langen. I will leave this position in a few weeks and travel to Buenos Aires, where I have taken a position as a private teacher for three years.

### **From a letter to his sister**

Buenos Aires, 16 July 1899.

...I sometimes get a strange feeling in my heart when I read in your letters about the woods, Solomon's seal, and the Schiffenberg.<sup>vii</sup> A single word is enough to awaken images, sensations, moods, so that I feel surrounded by the scent of my Heimat's

forests, by flashes of sunlight filtering through green leaves, by bird songs and the comforting murmur of brooks, by the simple pealing of church bells on summer mornings fresh with dew, by the soft humming of insects in the heat of the afternoon. That is when I recognize how much my “Heimat with all its magic” has become a piece of my heart. True, there are beautiful birds here, but they don’t sing; there are magnificent flowers in all colors, but they lack fragrance. It is as if the animals and plants lack soul, much like the people, who lack a heart that beats warm and true. — Everything here is so cold and without soul. The women and girls are much like the flowers. Beautiful they may be, and they glitter in their garishly colored silk gowns and red makeup, but just as the flowers lack fragrance, so too do their faces, cold as stone, lack loveliness. And when Walter von der Vogelweide praises German women, “reht als engel sind diu wîp getân,”<sup>viii</sup> then I strongly suspect that Argentine women for all their beauty are inhabited by the Devil. Alas, when will I ever see German girls again with their natural red cheeks and their merry, welcoming eyes and kiss-happy lips?

Argentina celebrated her national holiday on 9 July. The Argentines are very patriotic—just so long as they aren’t asked to do anything for their beloved Fatherland. The celebration consists mainly of fireworks and parades. Of course, we can’t apply German standards to their parades—even so, their marching isn’t bad, at least as far as the line regiments are concerned. The army and navy cadets are sturdy, disciplined fellows. True, a German reservist would find seriously depressing the way they carry their rifles on their backs. But other than that, they at least march in step in the same direction, and they seem to be able to handle their firearms. But, if the street takes a slight bend so that they are required to wheel around; well, one of the sergeants has to run over to the corner and mark the point with a green flag on his bayonet, otherwise the fellows won’t make the turn. — The cavalry is truly stately because even the common man rides horseback here, and that is something one has to give the locals: they learn to ride from early childhood, and they sit on their steeds like bronze statues. This is rarely the case with our officers. — The artillery units aren’t too bad either, although one has to turn a blind eye to a bit of rust and dirt. In Germany the entire battery would end up in the hole. But what we don’t have over there, and could very well use, is our own alpine artillery: small cannons carried on mule back.

The National Guard is now approaching with tentative step. They are the pride of the nation, although they make a travesty of the military ideal. Every young Argentine of weapons-bearing age belongs to the Guard, and three months out of the year he is supposed to take part in maneuvers on Sunday mornings every now and again. But our young defender of the Fatherland is not particularly enthusiastic, and so he simply stays home. Only a small fraction actually shows up for the maneuvers, and of course the government doesn't dare pursue evaders too vigorously, not least because their own sons are among them. The only thing that happens is that each regiment sends out a patrol to look for no-shows, and if one of these poor devils happens to fall into their hands and can't buy his way out by spotting a few rounds, he is merely forced to live in the barracks for two days and do his service! Only about a tenth of these gentlemen bother to show up for the parade, and the way they dawdle along; well, it's really beneath criticism. — An elderly gentleman is standing next to me: "I see you haven't been here long," he says to me. "This is wonderful compared to how it was. Forty years ago they were all running around barefoot, and one fellow wore one sort of uniform, another a different sort!" — One remarkable thing is how all peoples march together rank and file, from blond Italians to Indians, Mulattos, and full-blooded Negroes...

### **From a letter to his father**

Buenos Aires, 15 March 1900 [the Boer War is nearing an end]

...The great British army is rolling slowly through the land of that unhappy little Volk and celebrates "victory" upon "victory," without having accomplished anything of note—except for the heroic defense of Ladysmith and Mafeking. Now in particular, when things are going so badly for the poor Boers, I often feel that I should offer my services as a non-commissioned officer and place my life at the disposal of this courageous and brave little Volk, so kindred to ours by history and blood. If I had gone to Pretoria instead of to Buenos Aires, I would most certainly have joined their ranks, and perhaps had a decent burial on some green heath—not a fate to be scorned in any case. And I am sure that you will not scold me for being reckless and ungrateful for saying it. ...But I am not in Pretoria, nor am I a member of the Boer army, or lying in the cool earth; I am

a humble little private tutor in Buenos Aires, sitting here and cursing the British. Thank God one can still do that! If only the Boers could take Mafeking and give the English a good hiding, and then big things were to happen in India, and Menelik kicked up a ruckus in the Sudan, and the French got surly in Egypt and elsewhere—if only, if only! But one can still hope!

### **To his brother**

Later the same year.

...I am still attracted to idyllic settings—in nature to summer forests; in daily life to small towns. It may be that I am a born Philistine. In spite of my desire for action! Now in particular I would like to go to South Africa and be among those who go down fighting. I agree completely with De Wet's<sup>ix</sup> decision to continue guerilla war to the end...

### **From a letter to his brother**

Buenos Aires, 11 February 1902.

...We have just received a parcel that included a pamphlet titled “The War in South Africa.”...A cursory glance awakened such anger in me that I jumped up and ran about my room in a rage. There is such a thing as passion for justice and for a Volk that is part of our race and has showed itself worthy of that race. And love for this Volk stokes my hatred for its oppressor, that barbaric, corrupt nation of shopkeepers. Events like those currently taking place in South Africa awaken the beast in me, such that I would gladly gun down in cold blood that murderous gang of arsonists. — Well, I'm far from the firing line, and Papa doesn't want to hear about my sympathies with the Boers. But do it I would!...

### **From a letter to Prof. Wilhelm Simon in Baltimore<sup>x</sup>**

Buenos Aires, 16 September 1900.

...What I have gained here is primarily a perspective on peoples and their relationships to one another and on political and economic conditions that is tremendously different from what one gets at home from books and newspapers. The end result of all comparisons is that, viewed objectively—setting aside the natural feelings of love, and gratitude—my Fatherland seems to me relatively the best in both national and political terms. I have grasped more deeply the soul of the German Volk compared with that of other nations than I would have been able to at home, particularly through novels. The fundamental character of the German soul seems to me to consist of an unassuming warmth and cordiality, manly courage, faithfulness, and a sense of duty. And if the latter characteristics have proved a real factor in the history and life of our Volk, then I firmly believe that even today they have not become mere clichés, as is so often claimed, but are actually rooted in the broad masses. I consider them to be the most valuable possessions of our Volk, which we must all protect and cultivate, each in his own way. As pleased as I am that we have stopped dreaming and have taken up our position among the vanguard of nations and have begun to battle both politically and economically, the price of this position in the world would have been too steep if as a result we became a petty, arrogant, and faithless nation of shopkeepers like the English.

On the other hand, the failings of our nation appear in greater relief here than at home. Disunity, imitating the foreign at the expense of our own Volk, small-minded philistinism with all its petty and hideous characteristics, gossip being chief among them. The German colony here is so split, disunited like no other. For every association there is a counter-association that originated from personal arguments within the original one. The worst thing is the indifference to nation: there is no other Volk that gives up its singularity as quickly as we do. The German who marries a “local” is lost to the German nation; in most cases his children will not know their father’s mother tongue, and he himself will only trot it out when it suits him. The sons of two Germans who were born here (and I have gotten to know many like them) look upon their parents’ Heimat with contempt and agree with that pretentious and self-important paean to “la Republica Argentina,” a depressing anthem when contrasted to the reality. At the same time, they show absolutely no earnestness or self-sacrificing desire to improve the miserable conditions in their “Fatherland.” And I see no possibility that they will.

Things will never improve under such offspring; corruption has penetrated too thoroughly into all levels of the population. . . . It seems to me that even the most confirmed republican would become skeptical here. But it seems that political corruption comes to bitter light even among a highly civilized people like the French, as evidenced by the Dreyfus Affair. I didn't think that such corruption had infected the United States; I have only recently learned the contrary from your letter. I had thought that there the ideal of republican freedom had been well nigh realized. However, I don't consider the republic to be the best form of government, at least not in these times, because an absolute central authority is needed to pursue a foreign policy, at least for a state that is engaged in world affairs. Where would we Germans have been if a decision by the Reichstag had been required before we could take a position on the China question! We should be very happy to have as energetic and vigorous a personage as Wilhelm II as monarch. He was ridiculed by other nations at first, but he has now managed to garner general respect. Our foreign affairs could not be in better hands; however, internally this imperial power, which tends so decidedly toward autocracy, is held in check by a strong German representative body. Thus, our form of government strikes me as the best imaginable in our present circumstances, better even than the English one, which has much to recommend it. But to have a mere puppet sitting on the throne, one who is incapable of acting on his own and expends not a bit of his own power on the fate of his Volk—that I find unworthy of a great Volk.

**From his answer to an astonished inquiry from his brother and go-between on the occasion of sending him war orders for 1901-02, according to which Vice-Sergeant Major Kraft (Res.) was named a Lieutenant in the 118th<sup>xi</sup> Infantry Regiment.**Buenos Aires, 21 April 1901.

. . . I'm sure they have valid reasons for making me a "lieutenant" should there be a mobilization. . . . You can see how they have worked out even the minutest details for this eventuality. For the time being, I remain Vice-Sergeant Major in the reserves. Back then I didn't take steps to stop my name from being removed from the candidates list, as my predecessor did, because then I really would have had to choose. However, it is my

firm conviction that I would cease to be a free man as a reserve officer, and that would be too great a sacrifice....

**From a patriotic speech on the occasion of the 12th annual meeting of the Altherrn Bund<sup>xii</sup> of the Arminia fraternity, Giessen, held in Frankfurt a.M., 12 October 1902**

Deutsche Worte hör' ich wieder;  
Sei begrüßt mit Herz und Hand,  
Land der Freude, Land der Lieder,  
Schönes teures Vaterland.<sup>xiii</sup>

Once again I hear German words,  
Greetings with my heart and hand,  
Land of joy, land of songs,  
My beautiful, dear Fatherland!

These were the words sung 60 years ago by the German poet [Fallerleben] on his return from France to his German Heimat. Since then, many thousands of hearts have rejoiced upon returning from abroad, though they may not have clothed their sentiments in a poet's words. My heart did, too, when I set foot on German soil again a few weeks ago. It is an indescribably wonderful feeling to hear one's beloved mother tongue spoken after many years away, and again to see German faces everywhere. The men robust and true-hearted, the women and girls sweet-natured and gracious. They lack the cold beauty of South American women, nor are they as resolute, firm, and manly as the daughters of the Yankees: they simply are what does a German heart good. And then I wander as if in a trance through old towns with their crooked lanes, and everywhere I encounter witnesses from bygone days greeting me from those ancient walls, where cozy, dimly lit rooms invite me to a manly drink.

...Viewed objectively there may well be more beautiful countries in the world...  
But for us the most beautiful country in the world is our Heimat with its autumn storms

and severe, raw winters, our Heimat that raised us to hard and dutiful work, that has in the change of seasons with all their wonders developed our deep and dreamy German temperament...

... We have shown what a strong, competent, and industrious nation can do. Our army has created for us the position among nations that we deserve. Our businessmen and industrialists have conquered the world for us and, in peaceful competition, they engage in front-line battle in far-off lands. About this we are joyful and proud. But: "What is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose his soul?"—the soul of our Volk? Once upon a time, when our Volk was unable to act in the world because we were splintered internally, we withdrew into ourselves, and became the "Volk of poets and thinkers." But now that we stand there in our glory, we are threatened with the loss of what is most precious to us: the core of our being, which has remained the same for centuries, the inner life of the mind, simple and unadorned. Our mad pursuit of the material goods of the world forces our ideals into the background and makes us unscrupulous. That nation of shopkeepers, the Anglo-Saxons, though racially kindred, provides us an object lesson in where this path leads. External brilliance and the inclination to the superficial that results from it displaces our old warmhearted simplicity. In our political life, a well-nigh Byzantine ethical flexibility has developed that undermines the moral substance of our Volk.

This is where real love of Fatherland must be brought to bear, and not just at patriotic banquets. We can, as fraternity members, act in accordance with our motto so that we may be absolutely faithful to our convictions. Our association can do its utmost—as can each German man—to ensure that our internal development keeps pace with the external, and that the happiness of our Volk is not based solely on external progress, but on its internal values as well. Only this can confer true happiness on an entire Volk, no less than on the individual.

### **From a later letter to his "uncle in America" after his return to his Heimat**

...I hadn't seen the Rhine since my mad trip abroad.... And now I am once again sitting beside the Rhine, and the green waves break along the banks as they always did;

the sky is a steel blue canopy over river and vineyards; and the world lies before me shimmering and hot in the stillness of the morning as it always did. Except that I have become another person, and yet have remained the same in my thinking and feeling. What all has not transpired since the enthusiastic days of my youth! My student years with their varied and lighthearted exploits, their small battles and wounds both internal and external, with all their rejoicing and deep pain, with their exuberant cheerfulness and serious work. Then came my practicum at the Gymnasium in Giessen, of which I knew every nook and cranny from my long-suffering student days. And now I myself stood at the teacher's desk, and my former teachers, strict as they were, now addressed me as "colleague." — That was followed by my stint as a soldier, which opened up an entirely new world to me. I threw myself whole-heartedly into that as well. I served conscientiously to obtain the buttons and trim as well as the proud saber and sword knot. — Then I left the town of my birth, my beloved town, and went to Offenbach and Langen, and then to Frankfurt—my first steps and my first glimpse into the wider world! How different things looked than I had imagined in my child-like naiveté. And then an enormous leap with seven-league boots: the ocean blue, the metropolis on the banks of the La Plata, the lonely steppes, the mighty Cordilleras. And still further north, passing Mont Pelée, spewing fire and brimstone, to Baltimore and the home of my uncle, which had already in the fantasies of childhood figured as one of the wonders of the world. From there across the continent to the wonders of the West, which surpassed anything a young boy could have fantasized.. — Then the swells of the ocean and of life roared all about me—and finally acceptance into the friendly idyll of a school-master's sinecure in Büdingen.

My life passes before me, image upon image.

As does the Rhine in all its now almost forgotten glory. Past and present seem to fuse into a whole, and the magnificent old songs awaken in me: songs of joy, of gratitude, of longing—songs full of overflowing sensation, because the beauty of the river has made a poet out of a simple man. Then there are songs of defiance against our "archenemy," who has been seeking to conquer its banks by trickery and force for a thousand years. And if the call should once again go forth:

Zum Rhein, zum Rhein, zum deutschen Rhein!  
Wer will des Stromes Hüter sein?<sup>xiv</sup>

To the Rhine, to the Rhine, to the German Rhine!  
Who will be the river's protector?

with the same fervor that always thrilled me when I was a boy. If I heard that powerful song, I would even today rush to the flag and line up in rank and file—

Nicht in Worten nur und Liedern  
Sei mein Herz zum Dank bereit:  
Mit der Tat will ich's erwidern  
Dir in Not und Kampf und Streit!<sup>xv</sup>

Not merely with words and songs  
Is my heart ready with gratitude:  
With deeds will I respond  
To you in need and battle and strife!

### **From a letter**

Büdingen, 26 March 1904.

All of Büdingen seems gently fitted out for spring. A stork flew close by my window on his way to a nearby field where he could nibble on frogs. The recruits march through the streets with their colorful ribbons and glittering spangles in their hats, singing in harmony:

Für Deutschlands Ruhm und Ehr'  
Ja alle streiten wir.<sup>xvi</sup>

For Germany's fame and honor

Do we all fight.

It makes me feel quite soldierly, and as has so often been the case, I am infused with the great idea that flows from our reality: a Volk under arms! Each man a soldier, whether rich or poor. Each individual, down to the last Social Democrat, ready to bleed and to die for his country and Volk. Bebel's declaration was nothing new: there simply is no such thing as "Fatherlandlessness" because love for the Volk is one of the strongest passions known to man, stronger than any doctrine. It may slumber, but any external threat to our national existence will awaken it...

**From a letter**

Büdingen, 6 November 1904

...Labor that acts on consciousness—like the unfolding of energy in general—is among the most elevated emotions and one of the highpoints of human existence, and only such labor can engender celebration when the goblet is passed around and one feels united with good people. — You are completely right: one can still live in this world. But only when one finally knows and values death, and sees it as a staunch comrade, and has thus grasped the core of all religion and philosophy, the true art of living.

Auf in den Feind wie Wetterschlag,

O Reiterlust, am frühen Tag zu sterben!<sup>xvii</sup>

Into the enemy like a thunderbolt,

O rider's [cavalryman's] bliss, to die in the early morning!

**From a letter**

Büdingen, 29 March 1905

... Words are nothing, mere empty tinkling, no matter how honestly they are felt.  
Deeds alone make the man...

When my saber wound was closed and people said, “He took it like a man!” and one of the fraternity brothers pressed my hand and said, “Our fraternity looked superb!” – when I was sitting on an unruly horse in the field, and my friends commented, “That Udo, he isn’t afraid of anything!” – those were the most exalted moments of my life. And even if I were to write a book of epochal significance and the whole world congratulated me, my joy in it would not be half as great.

Words are just words, but deeds make the man.

That is why I should not have expended so many words on my deeds.

### **From a letter**

Büdingen, 17 February 1907

...It is with real pleasure that I have dedicated myself to the study of the history of the Napoleonic Age. Along with German accounts I have read the work of the Frenchman, Laurent, a Napoleon fanatic who defends the impossible, and Erckmann-Chatrion’s *The Conscript of 1813* and *Waterloo*. No age has engaged my soul as vibrantly as this powerful epic. My blood boiled as I read about the humiliation of the German Volk. I felt once again the shame of it, and my rage at the tyrant. No, he was not great, because true greatness requires honesty and cultivation of the heart. But this man—and this is especially evident in the work of his enthusiastic supporter, Laurent—not only lied and cheated foreign peoples, the objects with which his insatiable ambition toyed, but he unrelentingly played out a humiliating comedy with his own people. I hate “this man” (Queen Louise) even to his grave. — Then I read with throbbing heart about the Wars of Liberation, and once again, as often happened in my younger days, I wished, “O, if only I had lived in that great age and had found a beautiful soldier’s death!” Theodor Körner was the happiest of men; his greatest joy was in his own death.

Now I want to tell you about my dream of the past night:

Emperor Napoleon had announced a conference of all the European princes. King Friedrich Wilhelm III of Prussia says to me, “Would you please represent me at the

conference, as I have to take care of some business in the city.” The conference took place in the assembly hall at the Giessen Gymnasium. Napoleon climbed to the podium, took out a piece of paper, and called out: “Emperor of Russia!” — “Here!” — Emperor of Austria!” — “Here!” — “King of Bavaria!” — “Here!” And each rushed eagerly to the podium and took his position in a semi-circle in front of it—just like when the sergeant calls the squad leaders together at roll call. — Then he called out, “King of Prussia!” — But instead of saying, “Here!” I strode purposefully to the podium, stood at attention, and declared, “His Majesty the King of Prussia has charged me with representing him, and so I must appear here. But if I were King, I would not have come at all, as we do not respond to such an imperious tone!” (verbatim; I recited it to myself several times and reviewed the proceedings when I awoke.) I have forgotten what was talked about subsequently. But I do remember hurling a curse in his face. The little yellow Corsican stared at me for a long time and his face turned fire-red. I returned his stare resolutely with steely eyes, and thought, “He is going to have you arrested now. But it doesn’t matter; you finally said it to him!” — But Napoleon did nothing of the sort. He turned away and continued with the conference as if nothing had transpired. Then I thought—in my dream!—“How strange!” It was just like back in secondary school with “Bapsch.” We were translating Xenophon’s “Anabasis” with him just after he finished his practicum. The Greeks had come upon a herd of ostriches, and Xenophon writes, “but when we approached—ένταῦθα ἀπόχοντο (literally: they were gone). During the break we prepared the translation with a crib. I said, “The best way to translate this is: ‘they evaporated’, and when it’s my turn, that’s how I’ll translate it.”— And it came to my turn. I felt a bit uneasy because class honor was at stake. So I translated, “they evaporated.” And “Bapsch” stared at me, and his face turned fire-red just like Napoleon’s. I returned his stare and expected a box on the ear—but Bapsch did nothing of the sort. He simply turned away and corrected me: “ran away”—whereupon I continued to translate. I see this episode before my eyes as if it had happened today, and now it comes back to me in a dream...

**From a letter**

Büdingen, 12 May 1907

...The view through my little window over the old town onto the brilliance of spring is magnificent today. I do not envy you your veranda, nor your lovely tastefully furnished work room. At such quiet and collected times, when sunshine pours over the roofs and the wooded mountains emit a summery fragrance, my low, angled little chamber feels like a kingdom to me, and I feel infinitely happy—apart from one particular lack in my life. But still, it is a great and divine gift for an old bachelor of 36 years to be able to enjoy such times. And I will try to earn them, and to show my gratitude by my deeds for what life has given me. The most profound human striving is to wrest meaning and content from life, to find a peaceful vantage point from which to observe its ever-changing manifestations and its unfathomable riddles. Compared with that, how insignificant are all the little questions of the day and the busy-work of daily life and learning! If the foundation is missing, a great and all-encompassing cause, then a hearty drink at the right moment can often grant the inwardly gazing eye deeper insights and greater truths than years of painstaking scientific study and compilation. Such a drink can in an instant impart more religion than an entire life spent in churchly devotions. I can pray to God in wine just as well...

#### **From the same letter**

...Ah yes, memories! Their magic is what turns my tiny old chamber into a little Garden of Paradise. Because my entire life is built around what is contained in books, pictures, and other trifles, and each thing that catches my eye speaks to me of special times or of dear friends who have entered my life. — My bookcases always fill me with a sort of reverence. There I have gathered together the thoughts of the best and greatest men over the millennia—how they lived, how they experienced human sorrows and joys; just like us, except that God gave them the means to express it...

### **From the same letter**

The meaning of the word “liberal” has become increasingly clear to me over the years. There can really be only two world views, a liberal and a conservative. The ways in which one acts in politics, art, science, and life are merely the outcome of one or the other perspective, and it is the same with the political parties.

### **From a letter**

Büdingen, 23 June 1907.

...I was in Salzhausen eight days ago...and we heard the Hanau uhlands [lancers], and I saw the fanfare march for the first time—actually, more seen than heard. I can’t tell you what an impression it made on me. I suppose I’m just a childish spirit, but I simply don’t know what it does to me. I wrote you once—in reply to a letter in which you were overly effusive in praising a letter I had written—how little I value words compared to deeds, to serious manliness, and how certain realizations that to most reasonable people would only be cause for a smile have crystallized in my life. In my reason, too. But my feelings are completely different. One man shouts to his team, “pull to the right,” while the other shouts “pull to the left.” — I once copied down an aphorism from Varnhagen because for a change it pleased my reason: “Pure goodness and good will are the highest human attributes, in the face of which all heroic action with all its splendor and glory must retreat.” — Naturally, I subscribe to that at all times, even today; and as we siblings know best from our own beloved mother, there is a heroism of suffering that certainly surpasses all outward heroism. — But when I hear a regimental band play a smart and defiant march, there arises in me a nearly uncontrollable yearning for this sort of heroic action, and my heart aches because I have never been able to achieve it. I get completely depressed afterwards. I would only be able to bear this music if I had risked my life for another person, perhaps for a friend or a girl, and no one knew about it, or—a very different matter—if I returned home from service to the Fatherland decorated with the Iron Cross for honorable deeds under arms.

**From a speech given on the occasion of a Kaiserkommers<sup>xviii</sup> in Büdingen**

27 January 1910.

...The way the Argentines in Buenos Aires sang their national anthem and we Germans ours has always seemed to me to typify the national character of each people and the particularity of their patriotism. That pertains to both text and melody. Over there a fire made of kindling whose flames burst toward the sky but which soon collapses into ash if it is not constantly fed. Over here a hearth fire that glows quietly and lights and warms from within. This is how the love of each German for his Volk and Fatherland has manifested itself through the centuries—never outwardly showy, almost self-conscious and diffident, yet accomplishing mighty deeds in the realm of the spirit, and if need be protecting our sacred marchlands with sword in hand. — It is this quiet, modest love that shrinks from constantly proclaiming what is sacred to it, that does not bear witness in words, but reveals itself in an entire human life. It has found its deepest expression in the German folksong and in the songs of the wars of liberation. I can think of no more moving manifestation of this sense of a greater era than the simple song:

Ich hab' mich ergeben  
Mit Herz und mit Hand  
Dir Land voll Lieb' und Leben,  
Mein teures Vaterland.

I have devoted myself  
With heart and with hand  
To you my land full of love and life.  
My dear Fatherland.

Well, the times are different now. The German Reich was founded and has been consolidated. We have fought for our place in the sun and joined in the enormous economic battle that is now being waged by the great peoples in all parts of the world. Our German national spirit has stepped out of its quiet little chamber and is stretching it

muscles as it spreads across the German states, and it is mirrored in the brilliance of great wars and in a glorious history. And though it was once deemed a crime to preach and to speak of the Holy German Reich, today it is a virtue.

We are joyful at this transformation, and are proud of what we have accomplished.

But precisely because we love our Volk and Vaterland, because we are imbued with the feeling:

Was ich bin und was ich habe,  
Dank' ich dir, mein Vaterland!<sup>xix</sup>

What I am and what I have  
I owe all to you, my Fatherland!

because of all this, the love, which is the fruit of our gratitude, must sharpen our eyes. We must not allow ourselves to be blinded by the external brilliance that shines upon our young German Reich. We do not wish to conceal the fact that serious dangers threaten, and that the sky above us is not quite as clear and cloudless as it may seem. It is not only that our political existence is threatened from without, that our neighbors to the east and to the west are less than well disposed toward us; yea, that we have almost no real friends and must therefore remain forever armed, with hand on sword ready to strike—that isn't even the worst of it: suitable hand weapons are available to fight tangible, visible enemies, and we know how to use them from olden times.

But other dark clouds are gathering over our Fatherland. We live in a hard time, a time of transition that is full of irreconcilable differences within our own Volk. There is a danger that broad sections of our Volk will cease to understand each other, that they will move away from each other; and that is the worst thing of all. Let us never forget that we are all parts of a single great Volk. For us did our forefathers fight and bleed, and the spiritual riches that our ancestors stored up over the centuries are our common wealth and the spiritual bond of the German Volk. And so there develops in each of us the earnest patriotic duty to work together to bridge that gap. Each of us must in whatever sphere he has been placed act to reconcile and to balance.

Let us thus remember our more earnest duties as we enjoy this celebration, and let us solemnly vow to live, to strive, and if must be, to die for our Fatherland!

### **Letter to Paul Geheeb<sup>xx</sup>**

Büdingen, 15 October 1910

I have come to the conclusion that the position of mentor to Herr Scherl's<sup>xxi</sup> sons is not suited to me, or perhaps that I am not suited to it.

It is, of course, tempting to involve myself completely in the upbringing of two young boys. But I have no idea whose intellectual children they are, and in particular whose hearts they belong to. Nor can I judge whether it would be a satisfying and fruitful task to dedicate several years to them. — I am also tempted to go out into the world again, open myself up to new ideas, explore new territory.

### **Letter from Paul Geheeb to Udo**

Odenwaldschule, 25 October 1910

[I didn't respond immediately to your letter] but I did argue the matter back and forth in my mind and came to the following conclusion: if things really are as you write, the obstacles that keep you from taking this position are really not insurmountable, and the reasons for taking it could still gain the upper hand. Let's assume

- 1) Scherl were to offer you double your current salary,
- 2) the government is willing to grant you a one-year leave of absence,
- 3) it were possible to ensure that the position in Büdingen that you have become so fond of would be there on your return, and
- 4) Scherl were satisfied with the shortness of your stay, should the government grant you only one year or an even shorter leave (how much education can be accomplished with 2 young boys in ½ year or year!).

Given these assumptions (of course I have no idea whether they can be fulfilled), if I were in your place, I would jump at the opportunity with Scherl.

### **Letter from Udo to Paul Geheeb**

Büdingen, 8 November 1910

Naturally, I will follow up and seek out Herr Scherl in Berlin. [...] One question remains, namely whether my person corresponds to the expectations that they have in mind. One thing is clear: I am not suited to being a salon educator, and I would never accept such a position.

### **Letter to his young nephew**

Giessen, 8 January 1911.

My dear boy!

Today is your birthday, and all who love you wish you the very best. Your Uncle Udo would have liked to have been with you himself today so that he could tell you himself what his wishes are for you., But unfortunately that couldn't be, and so he has to write. So, what does Uncle Udo wish for you? — Well, he saw how proud and valiant you looked when you wore the uniform with your helmet and gun. And then he thought, “That boy will make a brave soldier one day!” Did you hear: a brave soldier! This is something that you can practice even now—being brave—and then when you really become a soldier, you will already know how! Above all, a brave soldier must be able to obey. That has to be learned as well. Learn it now while you are still with your parents, and then you will be able to when the corporal addresses you, and then the sergeant, lieutenant, captain, and general. — And a soldier must have courage so that he may advance boldly and not worry about what he might encounter. And if he should fall down and hurt himself, he shouldn't cry and complain, but simply pick himself up and march boldly onward.

You see, my dear boy, all men are soldiers, or should strive to be. We must all march through life, and we must all be bold and not cry and complain if life trips us up now and again and we fall down and hurt ourselves. That is how life is, and no one receives it as a gift. But this does not bother the real soldier; he marches smartly, firm

and upright toward the goal, which the Supreme Commander—let's just call him our “dear God”—has assigned us.

So, my dear birthday man: become such a soldier, a brave soldier!

This is what your faithful Uncle Udo wishes you on your birthday.

### **Letter from Udo to Paul Geheeb**

Büdingen, 11 January 1911

Scherl and his wife were so approachable and obliging. We discussed in complete frankness almost all questions that might become an issue, and I came away with the firm conviction that we will see eye to eye and that I will be given the greatest latitude in questions of education. We also discussed the religious side of education, and it turned out that Scherl is Protestant, and that his wife, whom I liked immensely, is Catholic, and that the children, who are baptized Catholic, are to be educated Protestant. The wife in particular was pleased that I am Protestant. Both of them assured me repeatedly of their gratitude, and that they would do everything they could to ensure that my position was as agreeable as possible. Scherl stated that he would mobilize the Prussian minister of culture immediately to motivate the Hessian government to grant my leave of absence. Imagine that! Here we have a shriveled, frighteningly ugly little man of a distinctly Jewish cast commanding a Prussian minister! At first I thought that I had misunderstood, but then the Hessian in me got fired up, and I said, “I doubt that our ministry would allow itself to be influenced in such matters.” — But that seems not to be out of the question.

Before I left, I was given 300 M travel money, and soon a letter arrived in Büdingen from Herr von Kupffer (he's Scherl's prime minister, the editor-in-chief of the *Berliner Lokalanzeiger*) to the effect that Herr Scherl would round my salary up to 700 M per month so that I would receive 8400 M instead of the 8000 M I had requested.

### **Letter from Udo's sister, Anna Raiser, to Paul Geheeb**

Worms, 9 October 1911

You have perhaps already heard what an abrupt end the Scherl affair has taken. In case you haven't heard anything directly from Udo, I will give you a brief summary. It has been a terrible disappointment for our poor Udo, who dedicated himself with such love and devotion to his new position. Eight days before October 1, Scherl simply had Udo informed that he considered their agreement null and void as of October 1, that is, at the end of the probationary period that Udo had himself suggested. This took Udo completely by surprise, and only upon inquiry did he learn that Scherl's inexplicable decision was made at the recommendation of the director, who apparently stated that a single hand must control both teaching and child-rearing. So, Scherl was prepared to give Udo his walking papers, even though he had pulled every possible string over three-quarters of a year to get Udo a two-year leave of absence. Luckily, Udo did not simply let himself be so easily fobbed off, but immediately wrote to Herr Scherl, who was vacationing at an ocean resort at the time, that this particular circumstance was absolutely not provided for in the agreement. Furthermore, he was now on leave for 2 years, and he had begun his doctoral work, which made his continued presence in Berlin necessary—he would at the very least have to insist on appropriate compensation. They finally agreed on 300 M per month for one year. The farewell comedy that ensued hit Udo where he is most sensitive, and it will take a long time before he gets over this matter. “All of it hypocrisy and lies,” is what he wrote me. Theo happened to be in Quedlinburg when we received the news, and he returned via Berlin so that he could support Udo during these terrible days. Udo is currently in Quedlinburg until the necessary negotiations with the Hessian state have been concluded and he hears whether he may continue his leave to finish his doctoral work. Berlin has been pretty much ruined for him; only his work will eventually allow him to regain his equilibrium. The only consolation is that, long-term, he really would not have fit into this milieu of intrigue and servants. He would never have made a lasting impression on these pupils.

**From a letter**

Büdingen, 15 November 1912.

... We have these past weeks again lived through another piece of world history. And once again all of Europe was mistaken. For a long time I felt strongly that things would surely explode, but in the end it seems that we are still far from it. But it does seem that people everywhere in western Europe are aware of the colossal responsibility. If it did come to a world war, I could not allow myself to be shoved into some garrison as a reserve militiaman [Landwehr II]. That would eat at me and destroy me. I wrote you during a break, incidentally, that in this respect I am like a young man of 17—even today! In short: I would have to go to the front!

### **From a letter to a friend in Stuttgart**

Büdingen, 28 July 1914.

... Great events are casting their shadows into the future, and who knows whether I will be able to write you in the near future. I have just volunteered for a mobile field unit. So, I want to take the opportunity to send you at least a few lines before the preparations for departure claim all my time. What are you going to do? You can't very well leave wife and children at the moment? Well, it had to happen, and the present moment is relatively advantageous for us. May Fate decide!... Yesterday evening we fought a great "wine battle" with dear friends. Some blessed soul brought a bottle of Markobrunner. The mood was festive, and our songs of martial defiance echoed loud across the quiet valley...

### **To his sister**

Giessen, 2 August 1914.

... I am so happy! Imagine, here in my beloved 116th they have accepted me with the open arms I yearned for. — The officer in the regimental office said, "I'll put you down as a sergeant. Please wait downstairs by the gate until I introduce you to the colonel." — So there I stood—for about an hour—and enjoyed watching the lively preparations for war. It did my soldier's heart good. Finally I was motioned over. A few formal questions, and then: "What do you do?"—"Gymnasium Professor!" Well, the

colonel's face really lit up with a smile. He thrust out his hand and said, "That's just wonderful! These are the sorts of people we need! You'll stay—officer's duty—we'll recommend that you be made an officer immediately. Heart's in the right place..." And so on. All of a sudden I was "Herr Professor" and was handed over to the company sergeant major<sup>xxii</sup> as such. I will be put in uniform tomorrow morning—active service, of course. We will march on Thursday. As of tomorrow I won't be able to leave barracks. There is a great sense of enthusiasm here; they almost can't keep up with the crush of volunteers. Thank God that we will be taking the field for just cause.

### **To his sister**

Giessen, Arsenal Barracks, 3 August 1914.

...Today I slept in the barracks for the first time. I feel that I'm "in the know" again, and the manly, martial life all around me, the firm determination and general willingness to give one's life for the grand cause; all this does my heart good...

The "Mother of the Company"<sup>xxiii</sup> picked me up and took me to the new arsenal to help assign the reservists who were arriving in their multitudes at the arsenal courtyard amid the singing of patriotic songs. I stood in this courtyard without interruption from 9 in the morning until 7 at night. After leaving the arsenal at 8 in the evening, I had some "lunch" and drank a glass of beer (the sale and consumption of alcohol has been prohibited in the arsenal for the past 5 days). Then company maneuvers began on the field, which lasted until 11:30 (at night)...

I am more or less the "Renommierfux"<sup>xxiv</sup> of the battalion. Whenever I meet other sergeants or corporals, the first thing they say is, "So you're the professor who joined up at 44!" — And the adjutant on duty even calls me "Herr Professor"—which I would rather forbid as it is so completely unmilitary. If only I had first earned their praise! — But usually people just think that I'm an old company sergeant major on active duty.

### **To his sister**

Giessen, Arsenal Barracks, 5 August 1914.

...The Grand Duke will bid us farewell tomorrow, and then a religious service will be held at camp. We leave in the evening—where to? Officially we aren't supposed to know. "But," so we are told, "if we should end up going to France, you should know that their time is always one hour ahead." It will be a tough piece of work to hold our own with honor in the face of this treacherous attack and against three great nations! But my heart beats stronger, seeing our Volk so united and resolute, something that was demonstrated in the Reichstag as well.

Farewell! Perhaps we will see each other again! Many thanks for all the love you have shown me these many years!

### **To his sister**

Giessen, Arsenal Barracks, 6 August 1914.

...Yesterday we took a military "stroll" with our captain and then did maneuvers on the Trieb.<sup>xxv</sup> It was a bit embarrassing as everything has changed since my last maneuvers\*; not a single command is the same. But it went fairly well with the support of a few smart recruits. And when the Captain patted me on the back and said, "Very good—very good!" he was, of course just trying to encourage me, given my advanced age. Everywhere I go I am still "the old Professor who volunteered for the Front," and wherever I go I am met with friendliness. The Captain seems strict, but I like him, and the other Vice-Sergeants as well.

I am once again completely a soldier—now if only my old bones hold up!

Auf in den Feind wie Wetterschlag,  
O Reiterlust, am frühen Tag  
Zu sterben!

### **Postcard to his brother from the field**

Lauterecken, 8 August 1914.

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<sup>xv</sup> 11 years previously, after his return from America. [the editor]

... We are riding happily into the summer morning. (We have been moving since yesterday evening.) We don't know where we are going, or whether we will see combat day-after-tomorrow or ever. But the mood makes my heart full to bursting. Just now, 8 in the morning, I ate a hearty field soup; these are the things you learn to do in wartime!  
...

### **To his sister**

Greweldingen (Luxemburg), 9 August 1914.

In the past 48 hours I have experienced so much that is exalting, and my heart is filled to overflowing. The detailed text of the Reichstag session, which I only managed to read on the day we marched out; the march itself through the crowded streets of Giessen amid unceasing jubilation, hand waving, and farewells; then the 20-hour train ride, the mood of the recruits, their songs, the "Wacht am Rhein," hurrahs and waving at even the smallest train stations. Everywhere we stopped girls and men met us with buckets full of coffee, bread, and much more. In S... (more exact locations can't be divulged, nor may letters be sealed)—the Crown Prince was standing on the platform at S..., and he walked slowly the entire length of the train, greeting the soldiers in each compartment, who returned his well wishes with wild enthusiasm. We unloaded at 6 o'clock in the evening. We then marched to Sch..., where we found accommodations in barns, bedded down on straw. Then wake-up at 12 at night and we marched at 2. If I should live, I will never forget this splendid march through the moonlit Saar Valley, how the long silent columns made their way. I discussed aesthetics with my colleague, Reserve Lieutenant Malzan, with whom I worked for a year in Büdingen—about Horace, Herwegh, and Hölderlin, as if we were just out taking a stroll; and then we talked about human fate and about life and death. All the soldiers and officers feel the same thing: the fate of the individual must recede in the face of this great cause. And then, even the thought that we might not be victorious seems completely out of the question; no one even considers it.

We arrived here at 10 o'clock in the morning. We were forced to rest shortly before because so many became weak in the summer heat and fainted. Even though I was

carrying the same packs as the recruits, and am weighted down the same as they, I could have marched on for hours. We set up bivouac here. We are met with friendly faces everywhere we go. We will continue our march at midnight—where to? My mood is indescribable; I am burning to encounter the enemy. I never would have thought it!...

### **To his brother**

Near Mersch (Luxemburg), 14 August 1914.

...My wish, finally to go into battle, has not yet been fulfilled, but almost. We heard the thundering of cannon all morning long as we marched out of Greiweldingen, and when we arrived in Röser at 1 o'clock in the torrid afternoon we received intelligence that a French cavalry division was emplaced in the woods just ahead of us. The situation was critical, as we only had one battalion and our machinegun detachment. We took up a defensive position in front of the village. I went with my colleague, Malzan, who was ordered to seal off a bridge with his detachment. We worked into the night, digging trenches 5 feet deep. Throughout the night the troops took turns, half of them digging ditches, manning posts, and standing patrol. I lay down next to Malzan, and we chatted about matters both serious and trivial, while the air was filled with fierce shooting—by our nervous posts and patrols, who by now were seeing ghosts everywhere in the thick fog. But the night passed without an attack. We were happy, because it wouldn't have been nice to die before we had even fought a great battle. — We then marched here from Röser. The Captain insisted that I ride with the baggage because of the open sore on my heel (it has always been my Achilles heel). But that was no pleasure ride either because baggage always makes massive detours in order to keep the main roads clear. And so I rode nonstop all night, wedged in among packs, trunks, and crates, from 2 in the afternoon to 7 the next morning when I arrived here. We have been here for 3 days, but we are prepared to pull out at any moment. No one knows a thing, not even the brigadier general. The company is bivouacked on a stubble field, and we sergeants and noncommissioned officers in a shed on straw. We do maneuvers in the morning; in the afternoon we mostly stretch out in the straw and sleep—that's something we can always do. We even located a "hotel" outside where one can get something to eat if one orders

early enough. Other than that, the entire town has been bought out. — We are close to the enemy. Mounted rifle units that are encamped here have had some minor skirmishes, with casualties, and they have quite some stories to tell. The 25th, which had taken part in the assault on Liège, arrived here today. It appears that the entire army corps is being mustered together here—and then comes the big battle. I yearn for it—all this roaming around amounts to nothing, especially if one has to fight one’s own feet all day. The army boots hang like clumps on your feet and rub against your heels. Other than that, I don’t find marching with a full pack particularly difficult, even in this awful heat. The pool in a nearby river is a blessing; after swimming we lie down naked in the grass and let the sun dry us off. I am still considered something of a curiosity.

Whenever one of the officers asks what an old boy like me is doing in active service, and I tell him, then I usually get, “Aha, so you’re the Professor...,” and then a hearty handshake. There are four of us reserve vice-sergeants in the company, and we all get along and share both good and bad like comrades. There had been a fifth, a cultivated, serious man who had previously been a teacher assessor in Hessen. He took his farewell from his young wife so hard that with each day he became more and more silent. He didn’t close his eyes once the night we left Giessen, just sat there silently staring straight ahead. At the Lauterecken train station where we ate in the morning he disappeared all of a sudden. A gendarme found him in the woods: he had gone mad. — One man died of a heart attack during the last march, and two drowned while swimming.

Other than that, one might doubt that we are in the middle of a war, given all the goings-on in this peaceful and beautiful region

Well that was slapped together. I need not tell you that my thoughts often turn to you. I dare not think about a reunion. I hope that we will soon get our first field mail...

### **Postcard to his sister from the field**

21 August 1914. In bivouac.

...The first field mail from Germany was distributed today. What joy!! Many thanks for your letter. It never occurred to me that my letter of 9 August could already be in

your hands—we were told that everything was being held back. . . . I can't write more about our movements. I am doing well; I'm tolerating the hardships better than I dared hope, given my old bones. Even my foot is completely healed. There is nothing to eat here outside of the company mess hall—a fresh egg is a priceless find. . . .

The spirit of our people is magnificent.

They will acquit themselves well.

**Postcard from the field sent by the severely wounded Lieutenant Malzan (Res.) to the Director of the Gymnasium in Büdingen**

Schloß Chalet field hospital near Libin (Belgium), 24 August 1914.

Dear Herr Geheimrat!<sup>xxvi</sup>

Yesterday and the day before the 25th (Hessian) Division was locked in combat with a superior French force four times greater than our own. We nonetheless acquitted ourselves brilliantly, though with terrible losses. Udo Kraft, a true soul who was loved and respected by all the officers and troops in the regiment, was among the first to fall. He was a faithful friend to me as well, a great help in these difficult times. May we keep him in honored memory! . . .

**From a letter from Malzan to the brother of the fallen**

. . . I was happy to have *this* true soldier in particular in my company, to be able to share the hardships and calamities of the campaign. I knew that he would be a great support to me. How often he volunteered to go out on some tedious patrol or watch—he was always the first. And even on the day of the battle, when I had been laid low by a severe headache brought about by exhaustion, he helped me back on my feet with a piece of bread, something that had become scarce. I will never forget our marches. I always marched together with “our Professor”—he was very popular and was always addressed as such by the officers. We learned the recruit songs and sang them to the fellows' delight. Or we let Udo recite the humorous pranks played by soldiers. It was delicious. — On the day before the battle, the Captain, who respected Udo highly and

trusted him completely, told me that he was to be promoted. That same day we were resting at the edge of a woods and talk turned to the possibility of death. Udo said that he had had a wonderful life, seen many different lands and peoples, and accomplished a few things. Even as a boy he had dreamed of achieving his greatest joy by dying in battle for a great cause at the pinnacle of life, being torn away suddenly...And so he may be called lucky to have died a hero's death just as the boy had wanted. He took a bullet through the temple right at the start of the battle, and he surely departed this world without pain.

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<sup>i</sup> Abiturientenkommers

<sup>ii</sup> Source?

<sup>iii</sup> Max Gottlob Ferdinand von Schenkendorf (1783-1817) – German patriotic poet, whose major theme was the restoration of Kaiser and Reich.

<sup>iv</sup> By Karl Follen (1795-1840), who studied law at Giessen and emigrated to America in 1824.

<sup>v</sup> Einen Salamander reiben – fraternity slang. The drinking ritual used to welcome an old fraternity member or to commemorate an event.

<sup>vi</sup> Paul Geheeb, later an important progressive educator who would go on to found the Odenwaldschule (1910) and later the Ecole d'Humanité (1934).

<sup>vii</sup> Mountain just south of Giessen

<sup>viii</sup> From: "Teutschlands Ehre."

Ich han Lande vill gesehen,  
Und nahm der besten gerne wahr;  
Uebel müße mir geschehen,  
Konnte ich je mein Herze bringen dar,  
Daß mir wollte wohl gefallen fremde Sitte,  
Was hülfe mich obe ich viel rechte stritte,  
Teutsche Zucht gat vor ihn allen.

Von der Elbe bis an den Rhein,  
Herwieder bis an das Unger Land,  
Da mögen wohl die Besten sein,  
Die ich in der Welte han erkannt;  
Kann ich rechte schauen gut Gelaß und Liep,  
Sam mir Gott! So schwur ich wohl, daß hie die Wib  
Besser sind, dann ander Frauen.

Teutsche Mann sind wohl gezogen,  
Recht als Engel sind die Weib gethan;  
Wer sie scheltet, der ist gar betrogen,  
Ich enkan sein anders nicht verstan.  
Tugend und reine Minne, wer die suchen will,  
Der soll kommen in unser Land, da ist Wunne viel;  
Lange müße ich leben darinne.

<sup>ix</sup> Christiaan Rudolph de Wet, 1854-1922; Boer field general.

<sup>x</sup> German chemist who immigrated in 1870. Udo's uncle.

<sup>xi</sup> Sic. Should be the 116<sup>th</sup>.

<sup>xii</sup> Association of "old" former members

<sup>xiii</sup> From "Heimkehr," August Hoffmann von Fallersleben, 1839

Deutsche Worte hör' ich wieder—  
Sei gegrüsst mit Herz und Hand!  
Land der Freunde, Land der Lieder,  
Schönes heit'res Vaterland!

German words again are ringing—  
Thee I greet with heart and hand!  
Land of joy and land of singing,  
Glorious, happy Fatherland.

<sup>xiv</sup> From a verse in "Die Wacht am Rhein" by Max Schneckenburger, 1840

Der Schwur erschallt, die Woge rinnt,

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Die Fahnen flattern hoch im Wind:  
Zum Rhein, zum Rhein, zum deutschen Rhein,  
Wir alle wollen Hüter sein!  
Lieb' Vaterland, magst ruhig sein,  
Lieb' Vaterland, magst ruhig sein,  
Fest steht und treu die Wacht am Rhein!  
Fest steht und treu die Wacht am Rhein!

<sup>xv</sup> From: "Mein Vaterland" by Heinrich Hoffmann von Fallersleben, 1839 (1798-1874) alte Bonner Burschenschaft 1819

Treue Liebe bis zum Grabe  
Schwör ich dir mit Herz und Hand  
Was ich bin und was ich habe  
Dank ich Dir, mein Vaterland!  
Nicht in Worten nur und Liedern  
Ist mein Herz zum Dank bereit  
|: Mit der Tat will ich's erwidern  
Dir in Not, in Kampf und Streit :|

In der Freude wie im Leide  
Ruf ich's Freund und Feinden zu  
Ewig sind vereint wir beide  
Und mein Trost, mein Glück bist Du  
Treue Liebe bis zum Grabe  
Schwör ich dir mit Herz und Hand  
|: Was ich bin und was ich habe  
Dank ich Dir, mein Vaterland! :|

<sup>xvi</sup> From "Die stolze Infanterie die Krone aller Waffen"

<sup>xvii</sup> From "Reiterlied (1841), Georg Herwegh, 1817 – 1875

Die bange Nacht ist nun herum,  
Wir reiten still, wir reiten stumm  
Und reiten ins Verderben.  
Wie weht so scharf der Morgenwind!  
Frau Wirtin, noch ein Glas geschwind  
Vorm Sterben, vorm Sterben.

Du junges Gras, was stehst so grün?  
Mußt bald wie lauter Röslein blühn,  
Mein Blut ja soll dich färben.  
Den ersten Schluck, ans Schwert die Hand.  
Den trink ich, für das Vaterland  
Zu sterben, zu sterben.

Und schnell den zweiten hinterdrein,  
Und der soll für die Freiheit sein,  
Der zweite Schluck vom Herben!  
Dies Restchen - nun, wem bring ich's gleich?  
Dies Restchen dir, o Römisch Reich,  
Zum Sterben, zum Sterben!

Dem Liebchen - doch das Glas ist leer,  
Die Kugel saust, es blitzt der Speer;  
Bringt meinem Kind die Scherben!

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Auf! in den Feind wie Wetterschlag!  
O Reiterlust, am frühen Tag  
Zu sterben, zu sterben!

<sup>xviii</sup> Drinking celebration of Kaiser Wilhelm II's birthday (27 January 1859)

<sup>xix</sup> From Heinrich Hoffmann von Fallersleben's "Mein Vaterland"

<sup>xx</sup> All correspondence involving Paul Geheeb are from the Paul Geheeb archives at the Ecole d'Humanité, Hasliberg-Goldern, Switzerland.

<sup>xxi</sup> August Scherl (1849-1921), one of the important Jewish Berlin publishers. A nationalist and monarchist, he published the *Berliner Lokalanzeiger* and *Die Woche*, among other publications.

<sup>xxii</sup> The German Army of the early 1900s had a Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO) rank of "Sergeant" which is roughly equivalent to a modern day Sergeant/Staff Sergeant (Stabs-Unteroffizier/Feldwebel) in duties and responsibilities. At the turn of the century, the senior NCO in a German company held the rank of "Kompagnie-Feldwebel" which can be translated into the American "First Sergeant" or British "Company Sergeant Major". To avoid confusion and to give the reader a greater appreciation of this NCO's responsibilities, I chose to use the British rank.

<sup>xxiii</sup> "Kompagniemutter" was the German soldier's nickname for the *Kompaniefeldwebel* (First Sergeant/Company Sergeant Major)

<sup>xxiv</sup> Fraternity slang. A Fuchs (=fox) was a first-year member of a fraternity; renommiert = respected

<sup>xxv</sup> Name of a road in Giessen that served as a parade ground.

<sup>xxvi</sup> Originally a Privy Councillor, but during the Wilhelmine period an honorific title granted to certain officials and businessmen.