

THE WAY TO THE CHURCHYARD

THE WAY to the churchyard ran along beside the highroad, ran beside it all the way to the end; that is to say, to the churchyard. On the other side of it were houses, new suburban houses, some of them still unfinished; after the houses came fields. The highroad was flanked by trees, gnarled beeches of considerable age, and half of it was paved and half not. But the way to the churchyard had a sprinkling of gravel, which made it seem like a pleasant foot-path. Between highroad and path ran a narrow dry ditch, filled with grass and wild flowers.

It was spring, it was nearly summer. The world was smiling, God's blue sky was filled with nothing but small, round, dense little morsels of cloud, tufted all over with funny little dabs of snowy white. The birds were twittering in the beeches, and a soft wind blew across the fields.

A wagon from the next village was going along the highroad towards the town, half on the paved, half on the unpaved part of the road. The driver's legs were hanging down both sides of the shaft, he was whistling out of tune. At the end of the wagon, with its back to the driver, sat a little yellow dog. It had a pointed muzzle and it gazed with an unspeakably solemn and collected air back over the way by which it had come. It was a most admirable little dog, good as gold, a pleasure to contemplate. But no, it does not belong to the matter in hand, we must pass it by. — A troop of soldiers came along, from the barracks close at hand; they marched in their own dust and sang. Another wagon passed, coming from the town and going to the next village. The driver was asleep and there was no dog; hence this wagon is devoid of interest. Two journeymen followed after it, one of them a giant, the other a hunchback. They walked barefoot, because they were carrying their boots on their backs; they shouted a good-natured greeting to the sleeping driver and went their way. Yes, this was but a moderate traffic, which pursued its ends without complications or incidents.

On the path to the churchyard walked a single figure, going

slowly, with bent head, and leaning on a black stick. This man was named Piepsam, Praise-god Piepsam and no other name. I mention it expressly because of his ensuing most singular behaviour.

He wore black, for he was on his way to visit the graves of his loved ones. He had on a furry top hat with a wide brim, a frock-coat shiny with age, trousers both too tight and too short, and black kid gloves with all the shine rubbed off. His neck, a long, shrivelled neck with a huge Adam's apple, rose out of a frayed turn-over collar — yes, this turn-over collar was already rough at the corners. Sometimes the man raised his head to see how far away the churchyard still was; and then you got a glimpse of a strange face, a face, unquestionably, which you would not easily forget.

It was smooth-shaven and pallid. But a knobby nose stuck out between the sunken cheeks, and this nose glowed with immoderate and unnatural redness and swarmed with little pimples, unhealthy excrescences which gave it an uneven and fantastic outline. The deep glow of the nose stood out against the dead paleness of the face; there was something artificial and improbable about it, as though he had put it on, like a carnival nose, and was wearing it as a sort of funereal joke. But it was no joke. — His mouth was big, with drooping corners, and he held it tightly compressed. His eyebrows were black, strewn with little white hairs, and when he glanced up from the ground he lifted them till they disappeared under the brim of his hat and you got a good view of the pathetically inflamed and red-rimmed eyes. In short, this was a face bound in the end to evoke one's pity.

Praise-god Piepsam's appearance was not enlivening, it fitted ill into the lovely afternoon; even for a man who was visiting the graves of his dear departed he looked much too depressed. His inner man, however, could one have seen within him, amply explained and justified the outward state. Yes, he was a bit depressed, a bit unhappy, a little hardly treated — is it so hard for happy people like yourselves to enter into his feelings? But the fact was, things were not going just a little badly with him, they were bad in a very high degree.

In the first place, he drank. We shall come on to that later. And he was a widower, bereft and forsaken of all the world, there was not a soul on earth to love him. His wife, born Lebzelt, had been taken from him six months before, when she had presented him with a child. It was the third child, and it was born dead. The others were dead too, one of diphtheria, the other of nothing in particular, save general insufficiency. And as though that were

not enough, he had lost his job, been deprived with contumely of his position and his daily bread — naturally on account of his vice, which was stronger than Piepsam.

Once he had been able to resist it, to some extent, though yielding to it by bouts. But when his wife and child were snatched from him, when he had no work and no position, nothing to support him, when he stood alone on this earth, then his weakness took more and more the upper hand. He had been a clerk in the office of a benefit society, a sort of superior copyist who got ninety marks a month. But he had been drunken and negligent and after repeated warnings had finally been discharged.

Certainly this did not improve Piepsam's morale. Indeed he declined more and more to his fall. Wretchedness, in fact, is destructive to our human dignity and self-respect — it does us no harm to get a little understanding of these matters. For there is much that is strange about them, not to say thrilling. It does the man no good to keep on protesting that he is not guilty, for in most cases he despises himself for his own unhappiness. And self-contempt and bad conduct stand in the most frightful mutual relation: they feed each other, they play into each other's hands, in a way shocking to behold. Thus was it with Piepsam. He drank because he had no self-respect, and he had no self-respect because the continual breakdown of his good intentions ate it away. At home in his wardrobe he kept a bottle with a poisonous-coloured liquor in it, the name of which I will refrain from mentioning. Before this wardrobe Praisegod Piepsam had before now gone literally on his knees, and in his wrestlings had bitten his tongue — and still in the end capitulated. I do not like even to mention such things — but after all they are very instructive.

Now he was taking his way to the churchyard, striking his black stick before him as he went. The gentle breeze played about his nose too, but he felt it not. A lost and most miserable human being, he stared straight ahead of him with lifted brows. — Suddenly he heard a noise behind him and listened; it was a little rustling sound coming on swiftly from the distance. He turned round and stopped. — A bicycle was approaching at full tilt, its pneumatic tires crunching the gravel; it slowed down because Piepsam stood directly in the way.

A young man perched on the saddle, a youth, a blithe and care-free cyclist. He made no claims to belong to the great and mighty of this earth — oh, dear me, not at all! He rode a cheapish machine, of no matter what make, worth perhaps two hundred marks, at a guess. On it he rode abroad, he came out from the city

and the sun glittered on his pedals as he rode straight into God's great out-of-doors — hurrah, hurrah! He wore a coloured shirt with a grey jacket, gaiters, and the sauciest cap in the world, a perfect joke of a cap, brown checks and a button on top. Underneath it a thick sheaf of blond hair stuck out on his forehead. His eyes were blue lightnings. He came on, like life itself, ringing his bell. But Piepsam did not budge a hair's breadth out of the way. He stood there and looked at Life — unbudgeably.

Life flung him an angry glance and went past — whereupon Piepsam too began to move forwards. When Life got abreast of him he said slowly, with dour emphasis:

"Number nine thousand seven hundred and seven." He clipped his lips together and looked unflinchingly at the ground, feeling Life's angry eye upon him.

Life had turned round, grasping the saddle behind it with one hand and slowly pedalling.

"What did you say?" asked Life.

"Number nine thousand seven hundred and seven," Piepsam reiterated. "Oh, nothing. I am going to report you."

"You are going to report me?" asked Life; turned round still further and rode still slower, so that it had to keep its balance by straightening the handle-bars.

"Certainly," said Piepsam, some five or six paces away.

"Why?" asked Life, getting off. It stood there in an expectant attitude.

"You know very well yourself."

"No, I do not know."

"You must know."

"No, I do not know," said Life, "and besides, it interests me very little, I must say." It turned to its bicycle as though to mount. Life certainly had a tongue in its head.

"I am going to report you for riding here on the path to the churchyard instead of out on the highroad," said Piepsam.

"But, my dear sir," said Life with a short impatient laugh, turning round again, "look at the marks of bicycles all the way along. Everybody uses this path."

"It makes no difference to me," replied Piepsam. "I am going to report you all the same."

"Just as you please," said Life, and mounted its machine. It really mounted at one go, with a single push of the foot, secured its seat in the saddle, and bent to the task of getting up as much speed as its temperament required.

"Well, if you go on riding here on the foot-path I will cer-

tainly report you," said Piepsam again, his voice rising and trembling. But Life paid no attention at all; it went on gathering speed.

If you could have seen Praise-god Piepsam's face at that moment, it would have shocked you deeply. He compressed his lips so tightly that his cheeks and even his red-hot nose were drawn out of shape. His eyebrows were lifted as high as they would go and he stared after the departing bicycle with a maniac expression. Suddenly he gave a forwards rush and covered running the small space between him and Life. He laid hold on the little leather pocket behind the saddle and held fast with both hands. He clung to it with lips drawn out of human semblance, and tugged wild-eyed and speechless, with all his strength, at the moving and wobbling machine. It seemed from the appearances in doubt whether he was seeking with malice aforethought to stop it or whether he had been struck with the idea of mounting behind Life and riding with glittering pedals into God's great out-of-doors, hurrah, hurrah! No bicycle could stand the weight; it stopped, it leaned over, it fell.

But now Life became violent. It had come to a stop with one leg on the ground; it stretched out its right arm and gave Herr Piepsam such a push in the chest that he staggered several steps backwards. Then it said, its voice swelling to a threat:

"You are probably drunk, fellow! But if you continue to try to stop me, my fine lad, I'll just chop you into little bits — do you understand? I'll tear you limb from limb. Kindly get that through your head." Then Life turned its back on Herr Piepsam, pulled its cap furiously down on its brow, and once more mounted its bicycle. Yes, Life certainly had a tongue in its head. And it mounted as neatly as before, in one go, settled into the saddle, and had the machine at once under control. Piepsam saw its back retreating faster and faster.

He stood there gasping, staring after Life. And Life did not fall over, no mishap occurred, no tire burst, no stone lay in the way. It moved off on its rubber wheels. Then Piepsam began to shriek and rail; his voice was no longer melancholy at all, you might call it a roar.

"You are not to go on!" he shouted. "You shall not go on. You are to ride out on the road and not here on the way to the churchyard — do you hear? Get off, get off at once! I will report you, I will enter an action against you. Oh, Lord, oh, God, if you were to fall off, if you would only fall off, you rascally windbag, I would stamp on you, I would stamp on your face with my boots, you damned villain, you —"

Never was seen such a sight. A man raving mad on the way to the churchyard, a man with his face swollen with roaring, a man dancing with rage, capering, flinging his arms about, quite out of control. The bicycle was out of sight by this time, but still Piepsam stood where he was and raved.

"Stop him, stop him! Ride on the path to the churchyard, will he? You blackguard! You outrageous puppy, you! You damned monkey, I'd like to skin you alive, you with the blue eyes, you silly cur, you windbag, you blockhead, you ignorant ninny! You get off! Get off this very minute! Won't anybody pitch him off in the dirt? Riding, eh? On the way to the churchyard! Pull him down, damned puppy. . . . Oh, if I had hold of you, eh? What wouldn't I do? Devil scratch your eyes out, you ignorant, ignorant, ignorant fool!"

Piepsam went on from this to expressions which cannot be set down. Foaming at the mouth, he uttered the most shameless ob-jurgations, while his voice cracked in his throat and his writhings grew more fantastic. A few children with a fox-terrier and a basket crossed over from the road; they climbed the ditch, surrounded the shrieking man and peered into his distorted face. Some labourers at work on the new houses, just about to take their midday rest, saw that something was going on and joined the group — there were both men and women among them. But Piepsam went on, his frenzy grew worse and worse. Blind with rage, he shook his fist at all four quarters of the heavens, whirled round on himself, bounded and bent his knees and bobbed up again in the extremity of his effort to shriek even louder. He did not stop for breath and where all his words came from was the greatest wonder. His face was frightfully puffed out, his top hat sat on the back of his neck, and his shirt hung out of his waistcoat. By now he had passed on from the particular to the general and was making remarks which had nothing at all to do with the situation: references to his own vicious mode of life, and religious allusions which certainly sounded strange in such a voice, mingled as they were with his dissolute curses.

"Come on, come on, all of you!" he bellowed. "Not only you and you and you but all the rest of you, with your blue-lightning eyes and your little caps with buttons. I will shriek the truth in your ears and it will fill you with everlasting horror. . . . So you are grinning, so you are shrugging your shoulders? I drink . . . well, yes, of course I drink. I am even a drunkard, if you want to know. What does that signify? It is not yet the last day of all. The day will come, you good-for-nothing vermin, when God

shall weigh us all in the balance . . . ah, the Son of Man shall come in the clouds, you filth, and His justice is not of this world. He will hurl you into outer darkness, all you light-headed breed, and there shall be wailing and . . ."

He was now surrounded by a crowd of some size. People were laughing at him, some were frowning. More hod-carriers and labourers, men and women, came over from the unfinished buildings. A driver got down from his wagon and jumped the ditch, whip in hand. One man shook Piepsam by the arm, but nothing came of it. A troop of soldiers marched by, turning to look at the scene and laughing. The fox-terrier could no longer contain itself; it braced its forefeet and howled into Piepsam's face with its tail between its legs.

Then Praise-god Piepsam screamed once more with all his strength: "Get off, get off at once, you ignorant fool!" He described with one arm a wide half-circle—and collapsed. He lay there, his voice abruptly silenced, a black heap surrounded by the curious throng. His wide-brimmed hat flew off, bounced once, and then lay on the ground.

Two masons bent over the motionless Piepsam and considered his case in the moderate and reasonable tone that working-people have. One of them then got on his legs and went off at a run. The other made experiments with the unconscious man. He sprinkled him with water from a tub, he poured out brandy in the hollow of his hand and rubbed Piepsam's temples with it. None of these efforts were crowned with success.

Some little time passed. Then the sound of wheels was heard and a wagon came along the road. It was an ambulance with a great red cross on each side, drawn by two charming little horses. Two men in neat uniforms got down from the box; one went to the back of the wagon, opened it, and drew out a stretcher; the other ran over to the path, pushed away the yokels standing round Piepsam, and with the help of one of them got Herr Piepsam out of the crowd and into the road. He was laid out on the stretcher and shoved into the wagon as one shoves a loaf of bread into the oven. The door clicked shut and the two men climbed back onto the box. All that went off very efficiently, with but few and practised motions, as though in a theatre. And then they drove Praise-god Piepsam away.

TONIO KRÖGER

THE WINTER sun, poor ghost of itself, hung milky and wan behind layers of cloud above the huddled roofs of the town. In the gabled streets it was wet and windy and there came in gusts a sort of soft hail, not ice, not snow.

School was out. The hosts of the released streamed over the paved court and out at the wrought-iron gate, where they broke up and hastened off right and left. Elder pupils held their books in a strap high on the left shoulder and rowed, right arm against the wind, towards dinner. Small people trotted gaily off, splashing the slush with their feet, the tools of learning rattling amain in their walrus-skin satchels. But one and all pulled off their caps and cast down their eyes in awe before the Olympian hat and ambrosial beard of a master moving homewards with measured stride. . . .

"Ah, there you are at last, Hans," said Tonio Kröger. He had been waiting a long time in the street and went up with a smile to the friend he saw coming out of the gate in talk with other boys and about to go off with them. . . . "What?" said Hans, and looked at Tonio. "Right-oh! We'll take a little walk, then."

Tonio said nothing and his eyes were clouded. Did Hans forget, had he only just remembered that they were to take a walk together today? And he himself had looked forward to it with almost incessant joy.

"Well, good-bye, fellows," said Hans Hansen to his comrades. "I'm taking a walk with Kröger." And the two turned to their left, while the others sauntered off in the opposite direction.

Hans and Tonio had time to take a walk after school because in neither of their families was dinner served before four o'clock. Their fathers were prominent business men, who held public office and were of consequence in the town. Hans's people had owned for some generations the big wood-yards down by the river, where powerful machine-saws hissed and spat and cut up timber; while Tonio was the son of Consul Kröger, whose grain-sacks with the firm name in great black letters you might see any day