

hands. Her whole body shook and trembled. Father came over to me. I asked him what was wrong. I told him that they had woke me. I asked him what was making them shout. He only tenderly placed his hands on my shoulders, looked back at Mother, and leaned down to me. He smelled of shaving lotion and tobacco. His face was rough with whiskers like sandpaper when he kissed me. He whispered softly in my ear about go to bed and everything will be all right in the morning.

I went to bed. I went through the dark in the living room again all by myself. The lights went off in the kitchen as I pulled the covers up to my neck. Everything was quiet except for the little crickets outside. Crickets make a strange noise with their hind legs, especially in the dark. I lay a long time looking at the blackness and listening to the crickets outside. I even pulled the cover over my head. It was hot and stuffy inside my little cave, but I lay that way. I was scared; and even though the sheets got sticky and damp, I lay there until I fell asleep.

Frau Plon

Margaret Hiles

WHAT could be wrong? Every morning at exactly five o'clock Hans awakened his master, the Herr Professor, by knocking on his door and announcing that the tea was prepared. Every morning his master answered immediately by saying he would have a cup in exactly three minutes. This morning Hans knocked, announced, but no answer. Hans knocked again, announced again, again no answer. He opened the door a crack and peeked in. There was the Herr Professor, nightcap in place on his head, sleeping like a baby.

Hans walked toward the bed and touched the Herr Professor on the shoulder. The Herr Professor jumped, opened his eyes and bounded out of bed.

"This is horrible, oh, this is terrible."

"Whatever is it, Herr Professor?"

"That I should sleep past my hour of arising. What a shame! What a scandal!"

"But why, Herr Professor? I'll tell no one."

"Promise me, Hans, oh, I beg of you."

"Certainly, sir, but tell me, are you well?"

"Poor me, Hans. What a night I've had. It must have been something I ate."

"What did you eat, sir?"

"Nothing unusual, that is except the strawberries and cream."

"And what did you have for dinner, sir?"

"Delicious! I went to that restaurant right off Lime Tree Avenue. I had pickled pigs feet and sauerkraut with beer."

"And did you have your usual, then?"

"Oh, yes, before retiring, I had my prune juice. Yes, it must have been the strawberries."

The Herr Professor got dressed and then sat down at the breakfast table and Hans proceeded to pour his tea. Hans went to the sideboard and picked up the afternoon mail which the Herr Professor always read the following morning. Hans began tidying up the room.

"Humpf, a letter from my publisher again. I wish he'd— what's this—What do I think of the new philosophical ideas of Mr. Loom? How do they expect me—"

"Sir, I believe your publisher sent you Mr. Loom's book just last—"

"Oh, yes, that. Well, now—"

The Herr Professor continued to read his mail and at the same time inquired of Hans about his mother, Frau Plön.

"Oh sir, she's having a horrible time. It's her chickens now."

"Her chickens?"

"Yes, sir. You see, my mother has chickens with definite personalities, and you just can't tell these chickens that they have to stay in a chicken coop. I tell you, sir, they'd laugh at you."

"Humpf!"

"Well, sir, they have been getting out. We have been finding the gate open and they have been going over into our neighbor's yard and mixing with his chickens. He doesn't like it a bit. Just the other night Mother and this man nearly came to blows. This man said, 'The next time it happens that those chickens get over into my yard, I am going to keep them.' This didn't set too well with my mother. She tells this man, 'Can't help it that the chickens get out, 'cause the gate is open and out they go. Maybe you open the gate yourself?' Well, the man didn't like this and he says, 'My dear Frau Plön, you never saw me open your gate, so you're not sure that that is what happens.' She says, 'The gate is left open, the chickens are out. Therefore, that is what happens. There are some things, even if you don't see them, that you just know happen.' Well, our neighbor seemed a little confused, but he gave us back our chickens."

The Herr Professor finished his breakfast and prepared to leave for the University. As he was putting on his grey overcoat and taking his bamboo cane from the stand, he said, "Intelligent, a very intelligent woman."

As was his custom, the Herr Professor was strolling along the avenue in the shade of the lime trees. He was deep in thought and seemed to be playing hop-scotch with his cane.

"Good afternoon, Herr Professor, and how are you this fine day?"

The Herr Professor wished that every person he met wouldn't speak so friendly to him, but would let him continue with his thoughts. Now he was forced to pass the time of day with this woman.

"Ah, yes. Did you say you believed more in Descartes than Plato? Well now, I'll have to give that some thought."

"I beg your pardon?" The woman looked at the Herr Professor, shook her head and went on her way. He gave a quiet, impish laugh. "That sends them away. Yes, indeed."

A little later he was brought up short by some of his colleagues calling his name. He stopped and waited for them to catch up with him.

"Herr Professor, we're so glad to see you. We have all been curious as to your reaction to the new philosophy of Mr. Loom."

"Mr. Loom? Ah, yes, Mr. Loom. Well—"

'I imagine his new book was rather startling, not so?"

"Oh, yes, rather startling."

"You have read it?"

"My soul, yes. I stayed awake all last night—"

"Ach, I was sure of it. The only thing that could interrupt your schedule."

"Tell me, sir, do you believe in the cause?"

"The cause? The cause of what?"

"No, no. Mr. Loom's cause."

"Oh, yes, that. Naturally I believe in the cause."

"Zoots! He believes in the cause. Then, sir, how do I know?"

"How do you know? Know what? Oh, no, not that again. Well, let me see, there are some things you just know."

"There are some things you just know? Revolutionary! And that is cause?"

The Herr Professor straightened his shoulders and said, "Naturally. Good day, gentlemen."

At exactly five o'clock Hans awakened his master, the Herr Professor, by knocking on his door and announcing that the tea was prepared. His master answered immediately by saying he would have a cup in exactly three minutes.

The Herr Professor sat down at the breakfast table and Hans proceeded to pour his tea. Hans then went to the sideboard and picked up the mail and gave it to the Herr Professor.

"Humpf, a letter from my publisher again. I wish they'd—what's this? They say they have heard rumors of my revolutionary ideas. My soul! I base knowledge on faith and exper—I never said—I—"

The Herr Professor continued to read and to sputter, and at the same time inquired of Hans about his mother, Frau Plön.

"Ah, she's interested in what you're doing. She always inquires about your work."

"An intelligent woman. Indeed, an intelligent woman. And the chickens?"

"Well, sir, more trouble. The chickens got out again last night. Mother waited until it was dark, then she went over to fetch our

chickens home. Sir, she was caught in the act. Our neighbor had a gun and said to her, 'Frau Plön, you back off, make more space between yourself and the chickens.' Mother replied, 'Sir, the space between me and those chickens is only in your mind. Anyway, those aren't chickens, they only look like the chickens you would like to see there.' Our neighbor got confused again while Mother started collecting her chickens. The man finally saw that Mother was pulling the wool over his eyes, pointed the gun at Mother and said, 'Lady, I suppose both you and the chickens in your skirt are all in my mind.' Mother allowed as how they were and started to leave, but she shouldn't have said that because our neighbor said, 'Lady, I don't know whether this gun is a gun or a stick, but whatever it is I'm going to shoot it.' He proceeded to do just that. Mother started yelping and running home. It was a dark night and she made it. You know, sir, it took us an hour and a half to dig the buckshot out of my mother's—well, my mother, but we got every chicken back and something funny also. There were three more chickens who just happened to jump into my mother's skirt."

The Herr Professor finished his breakfast and prepared to leave for the University. As he was putting on his grey overcoat and taking his bamboo cane from the stand, he said, "Intelligent, a very intelligent woman."

"Bertha, here comes the Herr Professor now. Let's ask him."
"Sir? Sir?"

The Herr Professor was walking along, his head down, his grey overcoat flapping and his bamboo stick over his shoulder.

'Ah, yes, you say Pascal and—'

"Sir, we wanted to ask you something."

"Pascal and—"

"Sir, please, just one thing."

The Herr Professor sighed, "Yes, what is it?"

"The oysters—should one buy oysters in May?"

"Pardon?"

"Well, you seem to know everything and I just thought— You see, Wolfgang so likes oysters and he has been—"

"My soul! If Wolfgang likes oysters, then, by all means, buy oysters."

"Oh, thank you, sir, such excellent advise."

The housewives hurried away, and two friends of the Herr Professors hailed him.

"Greetings! How goes your work?"

The Herr Professor shook his head sadly, "If I just had more time, perhaps I could get more accomplished."

"Really? Tell us, can you say any more about the fact that I know—"

"Not a thing. I've said too much already."

"Not so, Herr Professor, you are a distinguished and learned

gentleman and everyone is interested in your novel ideas."

The Herr Professor straightened his shoulders and assumed he was assuming a scholarly look. "I can say only this much today. There are two kinds of things—things as we see them and things as they really are."

One friend pleaded, "Herr Professor, you can't leave us there, pondering that statement."

"On the contrary, this is where I must leave you." The Herr Professor saluted with his stick, turned and walked off down the street with the lime trees.

At exactly five o'clock Hans awakened his master, the Herr Professor, by knocking on his door and announcing that the tea was prepared. His master answered immediately by saying he would have a cup in exactly three minutes.

The Herr Professor sat down at the breakfast table and Hans proceeded to pour tea. Hans then went to the sideboard and picked up the mail and gave it to the Herr Professor.

"Humpf, my publisher asks advice on inoculation for smallpox, on the minting of more money, and on the advisability of our attacking our neighboring country under the sign of Cancer. My soul, how should I know?"

The Herr Professor continued to read his mail and at the same time inquired of Hans about his mother, Frau Plön, and her chickens.

"Sir, before I tell you that, I have a message from my mother. She would like a copy of your book when it is ready. She pines for it. She wishes to put it on the memento table between her dried wedding flowers and a lock of her dead mother's hair, rest her soul."

"Dead mother's hair? My book between dead—ach, yes, I shall be happy to oblige. And the chickens?"

"Well, Mother couldn't walk right yesterday, but this morning she was getting over it. Our neighbor came over and said, 'I should like to know how some of my chickens got in your yard.' My mother said, 'I should know? Maybe your gate was left open.' The man said, 'That isn't right and you know it.' Mother said, 'I know what we should do, we should practice the Golden Rule and forget each other's chickens.' Our neighbor agreed. Sir, I should like to ask—tomorrow my mother is marrying our neighbor—could I possibly—"

"Certainly—certainly—take an hour off."

The Herr Professor finished his breakfast and prepared to leave for the University. As he was putting on his grey overcoat and taking his bamboo cane from the stand, he said, "Intelligent, a very intelligent woman."

"Ach, good, here comes the Herr Professor. I can set my clock. Exactly three-thirty."

The Herr Professor went hurrying down the street, head down against the rain. Two of his colleagues were scurrying with him.

"I say, sir, do you have any more to tell us about your theory of knowledge?"

"Not a thing. As a matter of fact I've now gone a little astray. Mind you, just a little."

"You don't say, sir."

"But I just said."

They hurried along.

"What are you working with now, if I might ask?"

"Right and wrong."

"No!"

"I'm working on what I shall call my Absolute Mandate."

"Can you tell us more?"

"I'm not sure. Only this I guess. The things you know because you know them. Well, everybody knows them. See? Universal. So, one should act the way he'd want everyone else to act. But you know this already. More work's needed here. That's all. Good day, gentlemen."

"That man. He's brilliant."

"So deep-thinking."

At exactly five o'clock Hans awakened his master, the Herr Professor, by knocking on his door and announcing that the tea was prepared. His master answered immediately by saying he would have a cup in exactly three minutes.

The Herr Professor sat down at the breakfast table and Hans proceeded to pour his tea. Hans then went to the sideboard and picked up the mail and gave it to the Herr Professor.

"Humph, now they want another book, because the last one sold so well." The Herr Professor read his mail and at the same time inquired of Hans about his mother, Frau Plön.

Hans replied, "She's fine, sir. I have a note for the Herr Professor thanking him for the book."

Hans took from his pocket a soiled envelope and handed it to him. He opened it and read:

"My Esteemed Herr Professor:

It pleases me to see that theoretical philosophy is rooted in good common sense.

It will not be my chickens next time, but fishworms.

Regards,

Frau Plön"

"Humpf, an intelligent woman. Indeed, an intelligent woman."