

Selection from

***THE
WORLD OF
YESTERDAY***
An autobiography

By STEFAN ZWEIG

Introduction by Harry Zohn
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THE WORLD OF SECURITY



PHOTO: WINTER, VIENNA

STEFAN ZWEIG AS A CHILD
(WITH HIS BROTHER, RIGHT)

*Still und eng und ruhig auferzogen
Wirft man uns auf einmal in die Welt;
Uns umspülen hunderttausend Wogen
Alles reizt uns, mancherlei gefällt,
Mancherlei verdriesst uns und von Stund' zu Stunden
Schwankt das leichtunruhige Gefühl;
Wir empfinden, und was wir empfunden
Spült hinweg das bunte Weltgewühl.*

GOETHE: *An Lottchen*¹

WHEN I attempt to find a simple formula for the period in which I grew up, prior to the First World War, I hope that I convey its fullness by calling it the Golden Age of Security. Everything in our almost thousand-year-old Austrian monarchy seemed based on permanency, and the State itself was the chief guarantor of this stability. The rights which it granted to its citizens were duly confirmed by parliament, the freely elected representative of the people, and every duty was exactly prescribed. Our currency, the Austrian crown, circulated in bright gold pieces, an assurance of its immutability. Everyone knew how much he possessed or what he was entitled to, what was permitted and what forbidden. Everything had its norm, its definite measure and weight. He who had a fortune could accurately compute his annual interest. An official or an officer, for example, could confidently look up in the calendar the year when he would be advanced in grade, or when he would be pensioned. Each family had its fixed budget, and knew how much could be spent for rent and food, for

¹Brought up in peace and stillness,
We are thrown all at once into the world,
Washed by a thousand waves.
Everything stimulates us, much of it pleases
Much of it chagrins and from hour to hour
A giddy feeling comes over us.
We perceive, and what we've perceived
Washes away the colorful feeling of the world.

vacations and entertainment; and what is more, invariably a small sum was carefully laid aside for sickness and the doctor's bills, for the unexpected. Whoever owned a house looked upon it as a secure domicile for his children and grandchildren; estates and businesses were handed down from generation to generation. When the babe was still in its cradle, its first mite was put in its little bank, or deposited in the savings bank, as a "reserve" for the future. In this vast empire everything stood firmly and immovably in its appointed place, and at its head was the aged emperor; and were he to die, one knew (or believed) another would come to take his place, and nothing would change in the well-regulated order. No one thought of wars, of revolutions, or revolts. All that was radical, all violence, seemed impossible in an age of reason.

This feeling of security was the most eagerly sought-after possession of millions, the common ideal of life. Only the possession of this security made life seem worthwhile, and constantly widening circles desired their share of this costly treasure. At first it was only the prosperous who enjoyed this advantage, but gradually the great masses forced their way toward it. The century of security became the golden age of insurance. One's house was insured against fire and theft, one's field against hail and storm, one's person against accident and sickness. Annuities were purchased for one's old age, and a policy was laid in a girl's cradle for her future dowry. Finally even the workers organized, and won standard wages and workmen's compensation. Servants saved up for old-age insurance and paid in advance into a burial fund for their own interment. Only the man who could look into the future without worry could thoroughly enjoy the present.

Despite the propriety and the modesty of this view of life, there was a grave and dangerous arrogance in this

touching confidence that we had barricaded ourselves to the last loophole against any possible invasion of fate. In its liberal idealism, the nineteenth century was honestly convinced that it was on the straight and unfailing path toward being the best of all worlds. Earlier eras, with their wars, famines, and revolts, were deprecated as times when mankind was still immature and unenlightened. But now it was merely a matter of decades until the last vestige of * evil and violence would finally be conquered, and this faith in an uninterrupted and irresistible "progress" truly had the force of a religion for that generation. One began to believe more in this "progress" than in the Bible, and its gospel appeared ultimate because of the daily new wonders of science and technology. In fact, at the end of this peaceful century, a general advance became more marked, more rapid, more varied. At night the dim streetlights of former times were replaced by electric lights, the shops spread their tempting glow from the main streets out to the city limits. Thanks to the telephone one could talk at a distance from person to person. People moved about in horseless carriages with a new rapidity; they soared aloft, and the dream of Icarus was fulfilled. Comfort made its way from the houses of the fashionable to those of the middle class. It was no longer necessary to fetch water from the pump or the hallway, or to take the trouble to build a fire in the fireplace. Hygiene spread and filth disappeared. People became handsomer, stronger, healthier, as sport steeled their bodies. Fewer cripples and maimed and persons with goiters were seen on the streets, and all of these miracles were accomplished by science, the archangel of progress. Progress was also made in social matters; year after year new rights were accorded to the individual, justice was administered more benignly and humanely, and even the problem of problems, the poverty of the great masses, no longer seemed

insurmountable. The right to vote was being accorded to wider circles, and with it the possibility of legally protecting their interests. Sociologists and professors competed with one another to create healthier and happier living conditions for the proletariat. Small wonder then that this century sunned itself in its own accomplishments and looked upon each completed decade as the prelude to a better one. There was as little belief in the possibility of such barbaric declines as wars between the peoples of Europe as there was in witches and ghosts. Our fathers were comfortably saturated with confidence in the unfailing and binding power of tolerance and conciliation. They honestly believed that the divergencies and the boundaries between nations and sects would gradually melt away into a common humanity and that peace and security, the highest of treasures, would be shared by all mankind. It is reasonable that we, who have long since struck the word "security" from our vocabulary as a myth, should smile at the optimistic delusion of that idealistically blinded generation, that the technical progress of mankind must connote an unqualified and equally rapid moral ascent. We of the new generation who have learned not to be surprised by any outbreak of bestiality, we who each new day expect things worse than the day before, are markedly more skeptical about a possible moral improvement of mankind. We must agree with Freud, to whom our culture and civilization were merely a thin layer liable at any moment to be pierced by the destructive forces of the "underworld." We have had to accustom ourselves gradually to living without the ground beneath our feet, without justice, without freedom, without security. Long since, as far as our existence is concerned, we have denied the religion of our fathers, their faith in a rapid and continuous rise of humanity. To us, gruesomely taught, witnesses of a catastrophe which, at

a swoop, hurled us back a thousand years of humane endeavor, that rash optimism seems banal. But even though it was a delusion our fathers served, it was a wonderful and noble delusion, more humane and more fruitful than our watchwords of today; and in spite of my later knowledge and disillusionment, there is still something in me which inwardly prevents me from abandoning it entirely. That which, in his childhood, a man has drawn into his blood out of the air of time cannot be taken from him. And in spite of all that is daily blasted into my ears, and all that I myself and countless other sharers of my destiny have experienced in trials and tribulations, I cannot completely deny the faith of my youth, that some day things will rise again—in spite of all. Even in the abyss of despair in which today, half-blinded, we grope about with distorted and broken souls, I look up again and again to those old star-patterns that shone over my childhood, and comfort myself with the inherited confidence that this collapse will appear, in days to come, as a mere interval in the eternal rhythm of the onward and onward.

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Today, now that the great storm has long since smashed it, we finally know that that world of security was naught but a castle of dreams; my parents lived in it as if it had been a house of stone. Not once did a storm, or even a sharp wind, break in upon their warm, comfortable existence. True, they had a special protection against the winds of time: they were wealthy people, who had become rich gradually, even very rich, and that filled the crevices of wall and window in those times. Their way of life seems to me to be so typical of the so-called "good Jewish bourgeoisie," which gave such marked value to Viennese culture, and which was requited by being completely uprooted,

that in telling of their quiet and comfortable existence I am actually being quite impersonal: ten or twenty thousand families like my parents lived in Vienna in that last century of assured values.

My father's family came from Moravia. There the Jewish immunities lived in small country villages on friendly terms with the peasants and the petty bourgeoisie. They were entirely free both of the sense of inferiority and of the smooth pushing impatience of the Galician or Eastern Jews. Strong and powerful, owing to their life in the country, they went their way quietly and surely, as the peasants of their homeland strode over the fields. Early emancipated from their orthodox religion, they were passionate followers at the religion of the time, "progress," and in the political era of liberalism they supported the most esteemed representatives in parliament. When they moved from their home to Vienna, they adapted themselves to the higher cultural sphere with phenomenal rapidity, and their personal rise was organically bound up with the general rise of the times. In this form of transition, too, our family was typical. My grandfather on my father's side was a dry goods dealer. In the second half of the century the industrial turn of the tide began in Austria. The mechanical weaving looms and spinning machines imported from England brought, through rationalization, a tremendous lowering of prices as compared with the accustomed hand weaving; and with their gift of commercial insight and their international view, it was the Jewish merchants who were the first in Austria to see the necessity and the advantage of a changeover to industrial production. Usually with but limited capital, they founded the quickly improvised factories, at first run only by waterpower, which gradually grew into the mighty Bohemian textile industry that dominated all of Austria and the Balkans. Whereas my grandfather, as a typical

representative of the earlier era, was engaged in the trade in finished goods, my father determinedly went over into the new era, and in his thirtieth year founded a small weaving mill in Northern Bohemia, which, in the course of the years, slowly and methodically developed into a considerable undertaking.

So careful a manner of expansion in spite of the tempting turn of affairs was entirely in keeping with the times. Furthermore, it was indicative of my father's moderate and entirely ungreedy nature. He was imbued with the credo of his epoch, "safety first." It seemed important to him to own a "solid" (another favorite word of the period) undertaking maintained by his own capital, rather than to create a huge enterprise with the help of bank credits and mortgages. His greatest pride during his lifetime was that no one had ever seen his name on a promissory note or on a draft, and that his accounts were always on the credit side of the ledger in the Rothschild bank, the Kreditanstalt—needless to say, the safest of banks. Any profit that entailed even the shadow of a risk was against his principles, and throughout the years he never participated in anyone else's business. If, none the less, he gradually grew rich and richer, it was not due to incautious speculation or particularly far-seeing operations, but rather thanks to his adapting himself to the general methods of that careful period, namely, to consume only a modest portion of one's income, and consequently to be able to add an appreciably larger sum to one's capital from year to year. Like most of his generation, he would have regarded a man who carelessly ate up half his income without "thinking of the future"—this is another phrase of the age of security—as a doubtful wastrel. Thanks to the constant accumulation of profits, in an era of increasing prosperity in which the State never thought of nibbling off more than a few percent of the income of even the richest,

and in which, on the other hand. State and industrial bonds bore high rates of interest, to grow richer was nothing more than a passive activity for the wealthy. And it was worthwhile. Not yet, as later at the time of the inflation, were the thrifty robbed, and the solid businessmen swindled; and the patient and the non-speculating made the best profit. Owing to his observance of the prevailing system of his time, my father, at fifty, was counted among the very wealthy, even by international standards. But the living conditions of my family kept pace only haltingly with the always rapidly increasing fortune. We gradually acquired small comforts, we moved from a smaller to a larger house, in the spring we rented a carriage for the afternoons, traveled second-class in a sleeping car. But it was not until he was fifty that my father allowed himself the luxury of spending a month in the winter with my mother in Nice. The principle of enjoying wealth, in having it and not showing it, remained completely unchanged. Though he was a millionaire, my father never smoked an imported cigar but, like Emperor Franz Josef, he smoked the cheap "Virginia," the government-monopoly "Trabuco," popular cheroots. When he played cards it was always for small stakes. Unbendingly, he held fast to his comfortable, discreet, and restrained manner of living. Although he was better educated and socially more presentable than most of his colleagues—he played the piano excellently, wrote well and clearly, spoke both French and English—he persistently refused every honor and office; throughout his life he neither sought nor accepted any title or dignity, though in his position as a large industrialist these were often offered to him. That he never asked anything of anyone, that he was never obliged to say "please" or "thanks" to anyone, was his secret pride and meant more to him than any external recognition. Inevitably there comes into the life of each one of us the

time when, face to face with our own being, one re-encounters his father. That trait of clinging to a private, anonymous mode of life now begins to develop more strongly in me from year to year, even though it stands in marked contrast to my profession, which, to some extent, forces both name and person before the public eye. And it is out of the same secret pride that I have always declined every external honor; I have never accepted a decoration, a title, the presidency of any association, have never belonged to any academy, any committee, any jury. Merely to sit at a banquet table is torture for me; and the thought of asking someone for something—even if it is on behalf of a third person—dries my lips before the first word is spoken. I know how outmoded such inhibitions are in a world where one can remain free only through trickery and flight and where, as Father Goethe so wisely says, "decorations and titles ward off many a shove in the crowd." But it is my father in me, and it is his secret pride that forces me back, and I may not offer opposition; for I thank him for what may well be my only definite possession—the feeling of inner freedom.

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My mother, whose maiden name was Brettauer, was of a different, more international origin. She was born in Ancona, in the south of Italy, and spoke Italian as well as German as a child; whenever she discussed anything with my grandmother or with her sister that was not destined for the servants' ears, she reverted to Italian. From my earliest youth I was familiar with risotto and artichokes, then still quite rare, as well as other specialties of the Mediterranean kitchen; and later whenever I went to Italy, I always felt at home from the first moment of my arrival. But "ly mother's family was by no means Italian, rather it was consciously international. The Brettauers, who originally

owned a banking business, had—after the example of the great Jewish banking families, though on a much smaller scale—early distributed themselves over the world from Hohenems, a small place near the Swiss border. Some went to St. Gall, others to Vienna and Paris, my grandmother to Italy, my uncle to New York; and this international contact gave them a better polish, wider vision, and a certain family pride. There were no longer any small merchants or commission brokers in this family, but only bankers, directors, professors, lawyers, and doctors. Each one spoke several languages, and I can recall how natural it was to change from one language to another at table in my aunt's house in Paris. They were a family who made much of solidarity, and when a young girl from among the poorer relatives had reached the marrying age, the entire family collected a considerable dowry to prevent her from marrying "beneath her." My father was respected because he was an industrialist, but my mother, although she was most happily married to him, would never have allowed his relatives to consider themselves on the same plane with her own. This pride in coming from a "good" family was ineradicable in all the Brettauers, and when in later years one of them wished to show me his particular good will, he would say condescendingly, "You really are a regular Brettauer," as if to say, "You fell out on the right side."

This sort of nobility, which many Jewish families arrogated to themselves, sometimes amused and sometimes annoyed my brother and me, even when we were children. We were always being told that these were "fine" people, that others were "not fine." Every friend's pedigree was examined back to the earliest generation, to see whether or not he came from a "good" family, and all his relatives, as well as his wealth, were checked. This constant categorization, which actually was the main topic of every familiar

and social conversation, at that time seemed to be most ridiculous and snobbish, because for all Jewish families it was merely a matter of fifty or a hundred years earlier or later that they had come from the same ghetto. It was not until much later that I realized that this conception of "good" family, which appeared to us boys to be a parody of an artificial pseudo-aristocracy, was one of the most profound and secret tendencies of Jewish life. It is generally accepted that getting rich is the only and typical goal of the Jew. Nothing could be further from the truth. Riches are to him merely a stepping-stone, a means to the true end, and in no sense the real goal. The real determination of the Jew is to rise to a higher cultural plane in the intellectual world. Even in the case of Eastern orthodox Jewry, where the weaknesses as well as the merits of the whole race are more intensely manifested, this supremacy of the will to the spiritual over the mere material finds plastic expression. The holy man, the Bible student is a thousand times more esteemed within the community than the rich man; even the wealthiest man will prefer to give his daughter in marriage to the poorest intellectual than to a merchant. This elevation of the intellectual to the highest rank is common to all classes; the poorest beggar who drags his pack through wind and rain will try to single out at least one son to study, no matter at how great a sacrifice, and it is counted a title of honor for the entire family to have someone in their midst, a professor, a savant, or a musician, who plays a role in the intellectual world, as if through his achievements he ennobled them all. Subconsciously something in the Jew seeks to escape the morally dubious, the distasteful, the petty, the unspiritual, which is attached to all trade, and all that is purely business, and to lift himself up to the moneyless sphere of the intellectual, as if—in the Wagnerian sense—he wished to redeem himself and his

entire race from the curse of money. And that is why among Jews the impulse to wealth is exhausted in two, or at most three, generations within one family, and the mightiest dynasties find their sons unwilling to take over the banks, the factories, the established and secure businesses of their fathers. It is not chance that a Lord Rothschild became an ornithologist, a Warburg an art historian, a Cassirer a philosopher, a Sassoon a poet. They all obey the same subconscious impulse, to free themselves of cold money making, at thing that confines Jewry; and perhaps it expresses secret longing to resolve the merely Jewish—through flight to the intellectual—into humanity at large. A “good” family therefore means more than the purely social aspect which assigns to itself with this classification; it means a Jewry it has freed itself of all defects and limitations and pettiness which the ghetto has forced upon it, by means of adaptation to a different culture and even possibly a universal culture. That this flight into the intellectual has become disastrous for the Jew, because of a disproportionate crowding of the professions, as formerly his confinement in the purely material, simply belongs to the eternal paradoxes Jewish destiny.



There is hardly a city in Europe where the drive towards :ural ideals was as passionate as it was in Vienna. Precisely because the monarchy, because Austria itself for centuries had been neither politically ambitious nor particularly successful in its military actions, the native pride had turned more strongly toward a desire for artistic supremacy. The most important and the most valuable provinces, German and Italian, Flemish and Walloon, had long since fallen away from the old Habsburg empire that had once ruled Europe; unsullied in its old glory, the capital had remained,

the treasure of the court, the preserver of a thousand-year-old tradition. The Romans had laid the first stones of this city, as a *castrum*, a fortress, an advance outpost to protect Latin civilization against the barbarians; and more than a thousand years later the attack of the Ottomans against the West shattered against these walls. Here rode the Nibelungs, here the immortal Pleiades of music shone out over the world, Gluck, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Brahms, and Johann Strauss, here all the streams of European culture converged. At court, among the nobility, and among the people, the German was related in blood to the Slavic, the Hungarian, the Spanish, the Italian, the French, the Flemish; and it was the particular genius of this city of music that dissolved all the contrasts harmoniously into a new and unique thing, the Austrian, the Viennese. Hospitable and endowed with a particular talent for receptivity, the city drew the most diverse forces to it, loosened, propitiated, and pacified them. It was sweet to live here, in this atmosphere of spiritual conciliation, and subconsciously every citizen became supernational, cosmopolitan, a citizen of the world.

This talent for assimilation, for delicate and musical transitions, was already apparent in the external visage of the city. Growing slowly through the centuries, organically developing outward from inner circles, it was sufficiently populous, with its two millions, to yield all the luxury and all the diversity of a metropolis, and yet it was not so oversized as to be cut off from nature, like London or New York. The last houses of the city mirrored themselves in the mighty Danube or looked out over the wide plains, or dissolved themselves in gardens and fields, or climbed in gradual rises the last green wooded foothills of the Alps. One hardly sensed where nature began and where the city: one melted into the other without opposition, without contra-

diction. Within, however, one felt that the city had grown s-e a tree that adds ring upon ring, and instead of the old fortification walls the Ringstrasse encircled the treasured ire with its splendid houses. Within, the old palaces of the court and the nobility spoke history in stone. Here Beethoven had played at the Lichnowskys', at the Esterhazys' Haydn had been a guest; there in the old University Haydn's *Creation* had resounded for the first time, the Hofburg had en generations of emperors, and Schönbrunn had seen Napoleon. In the Stefansdom the united lords of Christianity had knelt in prayers of thanksgiving for the salvation Europe from the Turks; countless great lights of science id been within the walls of the University. In the midst of all this, the new architecture reared itself proudly and grandly with glittering avenues and sparkling shops. But the old quarreled as little with the new as the chiseled stone with untouched nature. It was wonderful to live here, in this city which hospitably took up everything foreign and gave itself so gladly; and in its light air, as in Paris, it was a simple matter to enjoy life. Vienna was, we know, an epicurean city; but what is culture, if not to wheedle from e coarse material of life, by art and love, its finest, its most delicate, its most subtle qualities? Gourmets in culinary matters, much occupied with a good wine, a dry fresh beer, sumptuous pastries and cakes, in this city people were also demanding with regard to more subtle delights. Making music, dancing, the theater, conversation, proper and urbane deportment, these were cultivated here as particular arts. was not the military, nor the political, nor the commercial, that was predominant in the life of the individual and of the masses. The first glance of the average Viennese .to his morning paper was not at the events in parliament, or world affairs, but at the repertoire of the theater, which assumed so important a role in public life as hardly was pos-

sible in any other city. For the Imperial theater, the Burg-theater, was for the Viennese and for the Austrian more than a stage upon which actors enacted parts; it was the microcosm that mirrored the macrocosm, the brightly colored reflection in which the city saw itself, the only true *cortigiano* of good taste. In the court actor the spectator saw an excellent example of how one ought to dress, how to walk into a room, how to converse, which words one might employ as a man of good taste and which to avoid. The stage, instead of being merely a place of entertainment, was a spoken and plastic guide of good behavior and correct pronunciation, and a nimbus of respect encircled like a halo everything that had even the faintest connection with the Imperial theater. The Minister-President or the richest magnate could walk the streets of Vienna without anyone's turning around, but a court actor or an opera singer was recognized by every salesgirl and every cabdriver. Proudly we boys told one another when we had seen one of them pass by (everyone collected their pictures and autographs); and this almost religious cult went so far that it even attached itself to the world around them. Sonnenthal's barber, Josef Kainz's cabdriver were persons to be respected and secretly envied, and elegant youths were proud to have their clothes made by an actor's tailor. Every jubilee and every funeral of a great actor was turned into an event that overshadowed all political occurrences. To have one's play given at the Burg-theater was the greatest dream of every Viennese writer, because it meant a sort of lifelong nobility and brought with it a series of honors such as complimentary tickets for life and invitations to all official functions. One virtually became a guest in the Imperial household. I can still recall the imposing way in which my own introduction took place. In the morning, the director of the Burgtheater had asked "ie to come to his office, to tell me—after having congratu-

lated me—that my drama had been accepted by the Burg-theater; when I came home at night, his visiting card was in my room. He had paid me, a twenty-six-year-old, a formal return visit, for I, merely by being accepted as an author of the Imperial stage, had become a “gentleman,” whom the director of the institution had to treat as a peer. And whatever happened in the theater indirectly touched everyone, even those who had no direct connection with it. I can remember, for example, that once when I was very young our cook ran into the room with tears in her eyes. She had just been told that Charlotte Wolter—the most prominent actress of the Burgtheater—had died. The grotesque thing about her wild mourning was obviously the fact that this old, semi-illiterate cook had never once been in the fashionable Burgtheater, and that she had never seen Wolter either on the stage or elsewhere; but a great national actress was the collective property of the entire city of Vienna, and even an outsider could feel that her death was a catastrophe. Every loss, for instance the departure of a beloved singer or artist, was immediately transformed into national mourning. When the “old” Burgtheater, in which Mozart’s *Marriage of Figaro* was first given, was torn down, all of Vienna’s society was formally and sorrowfully assembled there; the curtain had hardly fallen when everybody leapt upon the stage, to bring home at least a splinter as a relic of the boards which the beloved artists had trod; and for decades after, in dozens of bourgeois homes, these insignificant splinters could be seen preserved in costly caskets, as fragments of the Holy Cross are kept in churches. We ourselves did not act much more sensibly when the so-called Bosendorfer Saal was torn down. In itself this little concert hall, which was used solely for chamber music, was a quite unimposing, unartistic piece of architecture, the former riding academy of Count Liechtenstein, unpretentiously remodeled for

musical use with wooden paneling. But it had the resonance of an old violin, it was a sanctuary for lovers of music, because Chopin and Brahms, Liszt and Rubinstein had given concerts there, and because many of the famous quartets had made their first appearance there; and now it was to make way for a functional building. It was incomprehensible to us who had experienced such unforgettable hours there. When the last measure of Beethoven, played more beautifully than ever by the Rose Quartet, had died away, no one left his seat. We called and applauded, several women sobbed with emotion, no one wished to believe that this was a farewell. The lights were put out in the hall in order to make us leave. Not one of the four or five hundred enthusiasts moved from his place. A half hour, a full hour, we remained as if by our presence we could save the old hallowed place. And when we were students, how we fought with petitions, with demonstrations, and with essays to keep the house where Beethoven died from being demolished! Every one of these historic buildings in Vienna was a bit of our soul that was being torn out of our body.

This fanaticism for art, and for the art of the theater in particular, touched all classes in Vienna. Vienna, through its century-old tradition, was itself a clearly ordered, and—as I once wrote—a wonderfully orchestrated city. The Imperial house still set the tempo. The palace was the center not only in a spatial sense, but also in a cultural sense of the supernationality of the monarchy. The palaces of the Austrian, the Polish, the Czech, and the Hungarian nobility formed as it were a second enclosure around the Imperial palace. Then came “good society,” consisting of the lesser nobility, the higher officials, industry, and the “old families,” then the petty bourgeoisie and the proletariat. Each of these social strata lived in its own circle, and even in its own district, the nobility in their palaces in the heart

of the city, the diplomats in the third district, industry and the merchants in the vicinity of the Ringstrasse, the petty bourgeoisie in the inner districts—the second to the ninth—’ and the proletariat in the outer circle. But everyone met in the theater and at the great festivities such as the Flower Parade in the Prater, where three hundred thousand people enthusiastically proclaimed the “upper ten thousand” in their beautifully decorated carriages. In Vienna everything—religious processions such as the one on the feast of Corpus Christi, the military parades, the “Burg” music—was made the occasion for celebration, as far as color and music were concerned. Even funerals found enthusiastic audiences and it was the ambition of every true Viennese to have a “lovely corpse,” with a majestic procession and many followers; even his death converted the genuine Viennese into a spectacle for others. In this receptivity for all that was colorful, festive and resounding, in this pleasure in the theatrical, whether it was on the stage or in reality, both as theater and as a mirror of life, the whole city was at one.

It was not difficult to mock this “theatromania” of the Viennese, and their following up to the most minute details of the lives of their darlings often was more than grotesque. Our Austrian indolence in political matters, and our backwardness in economics as compared with our resolute German neighbor, may actually be ascribed in part to our epicurean excesses. But culturally this exaggeration of artistic events brought something unique to maturity—first of all, an uncommon respect for every artistic presentation, then, through centuries of practice, a connoisseurship without equal, and finally, thanks to that connoisseurship, a predominant high level in all cultural fields. The artist always feels at his best and at the same time most inspired where he is esteemed or even overestimated. Art always reaches its peak where it becomes the life interest of a people. And just as

Florence and Rome in the Renaissance drew the artists and educated them to greatness, each one feeling that he was in constant competition and had to outdo the others and himself in the eyes of the people, so the musicians and the actors of Vienna were conscious of their importance in the city. In the Vienna Opera and in the Burgtheater, nothing was overlooked; every flat note was remarked, every incorrect intonation and every cut were censured; and this control was exercised at premieres not by the professional critics alone, but day after day by the entire audience, whose attentive ears had been sharpened by constant comparison. Whereas in politics, in administration, or in morals, everything went on rather comfortably and one was affably tolerant of all that was slovenly, and overlooked many an infringement, in artistic matters there was no pardon; here the honor of the city was at stake. Every singer, actor, and musician had constantly to give his best or he was lost. It was wonderful to be the darling of Vienna, but it was not easy to remain so; no letdown was forgiven. And this knowledge and the constant pitiless supervision forced each artist in Vienna to give his best, and gave to the whole its marvelous level. Every one of us has, from his youthful years, brought a strict and inexorable standard of musical performance into his life. He who in the opera knew Gustav Mahler’s iron discipline, which extended to the minutest detail, or realized the Philharmonic’s matter-of-fact energetic exactitude, today is rarely satisfied by any musical or theatrical performance. But with it we also learned to be strict with ourselves at every artistic presentation; a certain level was and remained exemplary, and there are few cities in the World where it was so inculcated into the developing artist. But this knowledge of rhythm and energy went deep into the people, for even the little bourgeois seated at his *Heurigen* demanded good music from the band as he did

good wine from the innkeeper. Again, in the Prater the crowds knew exactly which military band had the best “swing,” whether it was the *Deutschmeister* or the Hungarians; whoever lived in Vienna caught a feeling of rhythm from the air. And just as this musicality was expressed by us writers in carefully wrought prose, the sense of rhythm entered into others in their social deportment and their daily life. A Viennese who had no sense of art or who found no enjoyment in form was unthinkable in “good society.” Even in the lower circles, the poorest drew a certain instinct for beauty out of the landscape and out of the merry human sphere into his life; one was not a real Viennese without this love for culture, without this sense, aesthetic and critical at once, of the holiest exuberance of life.

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Adapting themselves to the milieu of the people or country where they live is not only an external protective measure for Jews, but a deep internal desire. Their longing for a homeland, for rest, for security, for friendliness, urges them to attach themselves passionately to the culture of the world around them. And never was such an attachment more effective—except in Spain in the fifteenth century—or happier and more fruitful than in Austria. Having resided for more than two hundred years in the Imperial city, the Jews encountered there an easygoing people, inclined to conciliation, and under whose apparent laxity of form lay buried the identical deep instinct for cultural and aesthetic values which was so important to the Jews themselves. And they met with more in Vienna: they found there a personal task. In the last century the pursuit of art in Austria had lost its old traditional defenders and protectors, the Imperial house and the aristocracy. Whereas in the eighteenth century Maria Theresa had Gluck instruct her daughters in

music, Josef II ably discussed his operas with Mozart, and Leopold III himself composed music, the later emperors, Franz II and Ferdinand, had no interest whatever in artistic things; and our Emperor Franz Josef, who in his eighty years had never read a book other than the Army Register, or even taken one in his hand, evidenced moreover a definite antipathy to music. The nobility as well had relinquished its erstwhile protector’s role; gone were the glorious days when the Esterhazys harbored a Haydn, the Lobkowitzes and the Kinskys and Waldsteins competed to have a premiere of Beethoven in their palaces, where a Countess Thun threw herself on her knees before the great demigod, begging him not to withdraw *Fidelio* from the Opera. But now Wagner, Brahms, Johann Strauss, and Hugo Wolf had not received the slightest support from them. To maintain the Philharmonic on its accustomed level, to enable the painters and sculptors to make a living, it was necessary for the people to jump into the breach, and it was the pride and ambition of the Jewish people to co-operate in the front ranks ‘to carry on the former glory of the fame of Viennese culture. They had always loved this city and had entered into its life wholeheartedly, but it was first of all by their love for Viennese art that they felt entitled to full citizenship, and that they had actually become true Viennese. In public life they exerted only a meager influence; the glory of the Imperial house overshadowed every private fortune, the leading positions in the administration of the State were held by inheritance, diplomacy was reserved for the aristocracy, the army and higher officialdom for the old families, and the Jews did not even attempt ambitiously to enter into these privileged circles. They tactfully respected these traditional rights as being quite matter-of-course. I remember, for example, that throughout his entire life my father avoided dining at Sacher’s, and not for reasons of economy—the difference in

price between it and the other large hotels was insignificant—but because of a natural feeling of distance; it would have been distressing or unbecoming to him to sit at a table next to a Prince Schwarzenberg or a Lobkowitz. It was only in regard to art that all felt an equal right, because love of art was a communal duty in Vienna, and immeasurable is the part in Viennese culture the Jewish bourgeoisie took, by their co-operation and promotion. They were the real audience, they filled the theaters and the concerts, they bought the books and the pictures, they visited the exhibitions, and with their more mobile understanding, little hampered by tradition, they were the exponents and champions of all that was new. Practically all the great art collections of the nineteenth century were formed by them, nearly all the artistic attempts were made possible only by them; without the ceaseless stimulating interest of the Jewish bourgeoisie, Vienna, thanks to the indolence of the court, the aristocracy, and the Christian millionaires, who preferred to maintain racing stables and hunts to fostering art, would have remained behind Berlin in the realm of art as Austria remained behind the German Reich in political matters. Whoever wished to put through something in Vienna, or came to Vienna as a guest from abroad and sought appreciation as well as an audience, was dependent on the Jewish bourgeoisie. When a single attempt was made in the anti-Semitic period to create a so-called “national” theater, neither authors, nor actors, nor a public was forthcoming; after a few months the “national” theater collapsed miserably, and it was by this example that it became apparent for the first time that nine-tenths of what the world celebrated as Viennese culture in the nineteenth century was promoted, nourished, or even created by Viennese Jewry.

For it was precisely in the last years—as it was in Spain

before the equally tragic decline—that the Viennese Jews had become artistically productive although not in a specifically Jewish way; rather, through a miracle of understanding, they gave to what was Austrian, and Viennese, its most intensive expression. Goldmark, Gustav Mahler, and Schönberg became international figures in creative music, Oscar Strauss, Leo Fall, and Kalman brought the tradition of the waltz and the operetta to a new flowering, Hofmannsthal, Arthur Schnitzler, Beer-Hofmann, and Peter Altenberg gave Viennese literature European standing such as it had not possessed under Grillparzer and Stifter; Sonnenthal and Max Reinhardt renewed the city’s universal fame as a home of the theater, Freud and others great in science drew attention to the long famous University—everywhere, as scholars, as virtuosi, as painters, as theatrical directors and architects, as journalists, they maintained unchallenged high positions in the intellectual life of Vienna. Because of their passionate love for the city, through their desire for assimilation, they had adapted themselves fully, and were happy to serve the glory of Vienna. They felt that their being Austrian was a mission to the world; and—for honesty’s sake it must be repeated—much, if not the most of all that Europe and America admire today as an expression of a new, rejuvenated Austrian culture, in literature, the theater, in the arts and crafts, was created by the Viennese Jews who, in turn, by this manifestation achieved the highest artistic performance of their millennial spiritual activity. Centuries of intellectual energy joined here with a somewhat effete tradition and nurtured, revived, increased, and renewed it with fresh strength and by tireless attention. Only the coming decades will show the crime that Hitler perpetrated against Vienna when he sought to nationalize and provincialize this city whose meaning and culture were founded in the meeting of the most heterogeneous elements, and in

her spiritual supernationality. For the genius of Vienna—a specifically musical one—was always that it harmonized all the national and lingual contrasts. Its culture was a synthesis of all Western cultures. Whoever lived there and worked there felt himself free of all confinement and prejudice. Nowhere was it easier to be a European, and I know that to a great extent I must thank this city, which already in the time of Marcus Aurelius defended the Roman—the universal—spirit, that at an early age I learned to love the idea of comradeship as the highest of my heart.

One lived well and easily and without cares in that old Vienna, and the Germans in the North looked with some annoyance and scorn upon their neighbors on the Danube who, instead of being “proficient” and maintaining rigid order, permitted themselves to enjoy life, ate well, took pleasure in feasts and theaters and, besides, made excellent music. Instead of German “proficiency,” which after all has embittered and disturbed the existence of all other peoples, and the forward chase and the greedy desire to get ahead of all others, in Vienna one loved to chat, cultivated a harmonious association, and lightheartedly and perhaps with lax conciliation permitted each one his share without envy. “Live and let live” was the famous Viennese motto, which today still seems to me to be more humane than all the categorical imperatives, and it maintained itself throughout all classes. Rich and poor, Czechs and Germans, Jews and Christians, lived peaceably together in spite of occasional chafing, and even the political and social movements were free of the terrible hatred which has penetrated the arteries of our time as a poisonous residue of the First World War. In the old Austria they still strove chivalrously, they abused each other in the news and in the parliament, but

at the conclusion of their Ciceronian tirades the selfsame representatives sat down together in friendship with a glass of beer or a cup of coffee, and called each other *Du*. Even when Lueger, the leader of the anti-Semitic party, became burgomaster of the city, no change occurred in private affairs, and I personally must confess that neither in school nor at the University, nor in the world of literature, have I ever experienced the slightest suppression or indignity as a Jew. The hatred of country for country, of nation for nation, of one table for another, did not yet jump at one daily from the newspaper, it did not divide people from people and nations from nations; not yet had every herd and mass feeling become so disgustingly powerful in public life as today. Freedom in one’s private affairs, which is no longer considered comprehensible, was taken for granted. One did not look down upon tolerance as one does today as weakness and softness, but rather praised it as an ethical force.

For it was not a century of suffering in which I was born and educated. It was an ordered world with definite classes and calm transitions, a world without haste. The rhythm of the new speed had not yet carried over from the machines, the automobile, the telephone, the radio, and the airplane, to mankind; time and age had another measure. One lived more comfortably, and when I try to recall to mind the figures of the grown-ups who stood about my childhood, I am struck with the fact that many of them were corpulent at an early age. My father, my uncle, my teacher, the salesmen in the shops, the members of the Philharmonic at their music stands were already, at forty, portly and “worthy” men. They walked slowly, they spoke with measured accent, and, in their conversation, stroked their well-kept beards which often had already turned gray. But gray hair was merely a new sign of dignity, and a “sedate” man consciously avoided the gestures and

high spirits of youth as being unseemly. Even in my earliest childhood, when my father was not yet forty, I cannot recall ever having seen him run up or down the stairs, or ever doing anything in a visibly hasty fashion. Speed was not only thought to be unrefined, but indeed was considered unnecessary, for in that stabilized bourgeois world with its countless little securities, well palisaded on all sides, nothing unexpected ever occurred. Such catastrophes as took place outside on the world's periphery never made their way through the well-padded walls of "secure" living. The Boer War, the Russo-Japanese War, the Balkan War itself did not penetrate the existence of my parents. They passed over all reports of war in the newspapers just as they did the sporting page. And truly, what did it matter to them what took place outside of Austria, what did it change in their lives? In their Austria in that tranquil epoch there were no State revolutions, no crass destruction of values; if stocks sank four or five points on the exchange, it was called a "crash" and they talked earnestly, with furrowed brows, about the "catastrophe." One complained more as a habit than because of actual conviction about the "high" taxes, which *de facto*, in comparison with those of the postwar period, were nothing other than small tips to the State. Exact stipulations were set down in testaments, to guard grandchildren and great-grandchildren against the loss of their fortunes, as if security were guaranteed by some sort of invisible promissory note by the eternal powers. Meanwhile one lived comfortably and stroked one's petty cares as if they were faithful, obedient pets of whom one was not in the least afraid. That is why when chance places an old newspaper of those days in my hands and I read the excited articles about some little community election, when I try to recall the plays in the Burgtheater with their tiny problems, or the disproportionate excitement of our youthful

discussions about things that were so terribly unimportant, I am forced to smile. How Lilliputian were all these cares, how wind-still the time! It had better luck, the generation of my parents and my grandparents, it lived quietly, straight and clearly from one end of its life to the other. But even so, I do not know if I envy them. How they remained blissfully unaware of all the bitter realities, of the tricks and forces of fate, how they lived apart from all those crises and problems that crush the heart but at the same time marvelously uplift it! How little they knew, as they muddled through in security and comfort and possessions, that life can also be tension and profusion, a continuous state of being surprised, and being lifted up from all sides; little did they think in their touching liberalism and optimism that each succeeding day that dawns outside our window can smash our life. Not even in their darkest nights was it possible for them to dream how dangerous man can be, or how much power he has to withstand dangers and overcome trials. We, who have been hounded through all the rapids of life, we who have been torn loose from all roots that held us, we, always beginning anew when we have been driven to the end, we, victims and yet willing servants of unknown, mystic forces, we, for whom comfort has become a saga and security a childhood dream, we have felt the tension from pole to pole and the eternal dread of the eternal new in every fiber of our being. Every hour of our years was bound up with the world's destiny. Suffering and joyful we have lived time and history far beyond our own little existence, while they, the older generation, were confined within themselves. Therefore each one of us, even the smallest of our generation, today knows a thousand times more about reality than the wisest of our ancestors. But nothing was given to us: we paid the price, fully and validly, for everything.