

THESIS

Subject A Study in the Ethics  
of Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach.

Name Ruth Mohl.

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A STUDY IN THE ETHICS OF MARIE VON EBNER-ESCHENBACH.

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE  
FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THE  
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THE undersigned, acting as a committee of the Graduate School, have read the accompanying thesis submitted by Miss Ruth Mohl for the degree of Master of Arts.

They approve it as a thesis meeting the requirements of the Graduate School of the University of Minnesota, and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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INTRODUCTION.

Morality is implicit in life. In the earliest history of primitive man, the foundations of morality were laid; not, to be sure, in conscious, deliberate choices between two incompatible ends, as we use the term morality today, but in the instincts of the savage and in the needs attendant on self-preservation. These elements determined man's conduct at first. Then, as he began to live in communities, the morality of custom swayed his will. What the rest did was the right or good for him. Only gradually, - and the process is by no means completed today, - did he come to realise that what was customary or good for others might not be the good for him. At this third stage of morality, man was guided, as we say, by his conscience. Conscience is nothing more nor less than the dictates of reason, plus intuition of the good of the final choice, as we deliberate over two ends between which we must choose. To choose we must reflect, and as we re-

1. Dewey and Tufts: Ethics. p.38-9.

flect, conscience tells us that this is right and that is wrong, and we act, or do not act, accordingly.

Now ethics, or the science of moral conduct, is founded on the well-grounded assumption that all mankind, when it chooses deliberately, on the whole seeks to further the good and to suppress evil. If this were not true, there could be no such science as ethics, and our world would not be a moral world. Therefore we see that the moral forms a part of the very woof and warp of human nature. Since our lives are lives of conduct, and since very few of our actions are without moral significance, we see again that life and the moral are very closely bound together.

This is no place for a discussion of the much-disputed relation of literature to morality; but it is worth while here to ask ourselves the question: If certain forms of literature claim to reflect life, and life is bound up with the moral, how can we demand that those forms of literature avoid the moral without also asking them to avoid life? Lyric and some dramatic forms

may very well be purely aesthetic, but in epic forms the theme is life, or a part of it, and the moral is sure to enter in. Of course, what critics abhor in the portrayal of the moral is the fact that it is often made so prominent as to distort the characters, which is like putting the cart before the horse, since it is human nature that determines the moral and not the moral, human nature.

Nevertheless, if we stop to analyse the charm of characters in literature who seem to live before us, we shall find that it lies in the fact that they, like ourselves, are rational moral agents in a moral world with the same responsibilities for the consequences of their acts.

<sup>1</sup>  
Like George Eliot, with whom she has often been compared, Marie Freifrau von Ebner-Eschenbach is deeply interested in ethical problems. Nor is it a mere passing interest with her,- it is an earnest endeavor to come to some solution. She has no fear of treating the moral in her novels and stories, but she never does so to the detriment of the artistic. <sup>2</sup> Otto Heller says of her works: "In her stories each individual is permitted to struggle in his own unhackneyed way with the problems

1. Anton Bettelheim in his "Biographische Blätter" gives in full the letters of Louise von Francois to Ebner-Eschenbach. In her letter of March 6, 1880 she says a new volume of Ebner-Eschenbach's Erzählungen remind her of George Eliot: "Sie könnten bei Ihrem tiefen Seelenblick, der Weltkenntniss, der feinen Ironie, die Sie mit ihr gemein, der formellen Beschränkung, die Sie vor ihr

2. Otto Heller: Studies in Modern German Literature. p.260.

that beset the path of life, but the course of fate is not deflected by any silly shrinking from an unhappy ending. The authoress shows only in that the outcome invariably vindicates the higher ethics." Other critics as well after praising her as an artist, almost always speak of the ethical value of her works. Let us look at some of these testimonies. Hellmuth Mielke<sup>1</sup> in "Der Deutsche Roman" says: "Ein warmer ethischer Geist spricht aus allen ihren Schöpfungen, allein er drängt sich nicht vor, er geht wie ein leiser Hauch durch sie hin, um an rechter Stelle<sup>2</sup> kräftig hervorzutreten." Erich Schmidt in his "Charakteristiken" says: "Diese Frau sieht die Welt, wie anmutig sie auch ein Stilleben zu schildern weiss, nicht im rosenfarbigen Licht der Idylle. Sie hat ihren Blick nie von dem Hässlichen abgekehrt, als dürfe das für sie nicht dasein. Sie geht der Schuld nach, der groben und der feinen. Ihre Sittenlehre wehrt vor allem dem Egoismus und begegnet sich darin mit den grössten Ethikern älterer und neuerer Zeit." Oskar Walzel<sup>3</sup> speaks of the "ethische Weisheit ihrer Aphorismen, die der Ausdruck einer reifen,

voraus haben, die gleiche Wirkung hervorbringen." Other comparisons between the two in Das Jahresbericht Vol.3 1892 IV 3:219; Gabrielle Reuter: Die Dichtung Vol.XIX p.54-55.

1.Hellmuth Mielke:Der Deutsche Roman. p.328.

2.Erich Schmidt:Charakteristiken. Zweite Reihe. p.302-3.

3.Oskar Walzel:Vom Geistesleben des 18. und 19.Jahrhunderts. p.446.



durchgebildeten Weltanschauung, eine echte und rechte Philosophie des Lebens." The literary critic of the <sup>1</sup>Weserzeitung is credited in the Jahresbericht of 1892 with speaking of her "feinem Gefühl für die Sitte, Kraft des Denkens und Neigung zum Sinnen und Grübeln." He goes on to say: "Ein Grundsatz ihres gesamten Wesens ist Menschenliebe, der Glaube an den guten Kern im <sup>2</sup>Menschen." Moritz Necker in the Weserzeitung admires "die Tiefe des Gefühls, die starke ethische Kraft" in <sup>3</sup>her works. Max Lorenz in discussing volumes eight and nine of her Gesammelte Schriften says: "Die sittliche Kraft der Menschenherzen ureingeboren ist - das ist es, von dessen Existenz Marie Ebner-Eschenbach fest überzeugt ist. Dass das Sittliche und Gute da ist in dieser Welt, daran glaubt sie."

It is the purpose of this thesis, first, to determine from her works what her ethics are, and, second, to reduce them so far as possible to a system. To accomplish the first of these aims, it will be necessary to determine how she brings out her ethics in her works and what the ethical themes are in some of her separate

1. Jahresbericht III 1892 IV 3:219-36.
2. Jahresbericht III 1892 IV 3:219-36.
3. Preussische Jahrbücher Vol. 108 p. 164.

stories and novels. For this purpose I have selected the longer and later works, especially those written between 1880 and 1900, as containing her most matured and settled views. The second step, that of reducing her ethics to a system, will be more difficult, inasmuch as she is not so much a philosopher, interested in past philosophies, in determining the unknown, and in setting up a system of her own, as she is a thinker, who takes the concrete facts of life and looks at them from all points of view until she has found the ideal one; for she is eminently an idealist, at the same time retaining some of the old conservatism. In reducing her ethical ideas to a system I shall endeavor to determine her answers to the problems that form the content of all ethical systems, namely, the nature of the good, the knowledge of the good, the authority of the good, and the relation of the self to the social good. In this respect her aphorisms, which contain her ethics in more condensed and technical form than her novels can, will be of great assistance.

It will be of advantage, before turning to the ethical significance of the themes of her separate novels

and stories, to consider briefly some of the influences that have helped to make her ethics what they are. Such a study will give us, incidentally, a clearer idea of the relation of her moral philosophy to the philosophical tendencies of the time.

BIOGRAPHICAL FACTS WHICH HAVE INFLUENCED  
THE ETHICS OF MARIE VON EBNER-ESCHENBACH.

Although her life has been comparatively uneventful so far as outward circumstances are concerned, Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach has always been a vigorous thinker. Hers is an experiencing mind. She was born of an old Bohemian Catholic noble family on her father's side and of a Saxon Protestant noble family on her mother's side, so that both Teutonic and Slavic blood flows in her veins. Her mother died a few days after her birth, and the children, of course, knew nothing but Catholicism. Her autobiography of her childhood, "Meine Kinderjahre", as well as such autobiographical stories as "Die Erste Beichte" and "Schattenleben" show that even as a child she was deeply interested in philosophical questions. At the age of seven she was sent by her father to the priest for her first confession. In the procedure she had to declare she would rather die than commit another sin. Being of an impulsive nature and having a strong

1. Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach: "Meine Kinderjahre". p.116-8.

love of the truth, the desire arose in her to remove at once all possibility of almost certain future wrongdoing by jumping out of a window and killing herself. The only thing that saved her was that in her jump her head hit the upper half of the window, and she was knocked senseless back into the room. As a child she suffered terrible qualms of conscience for her own wrong-doing and was indignant over wrong done to others. When the laborers on the family estate at Zdislavic were mistreated, she would stamp her foot in rage and demand that the wrong be righted. She was the champion of the weak and helpless everywhere, whether it was to save a cat from drowning, although she was frightened at sight of one, or to cry out at the neglect of a mother, left penniless by the death of her son, the tutor of Marie's brothers. Of this event she says in "Meine Kinderjahre" : "Ich kam von der Frage nicht fort: Was wird geschehen, was wird man tun? Es wird geschehen, man wird tun, was in solchen Fällen das Gewöhnliche ist. Man wird, von Mitleid erfüllt, einen

ungemein warmen und herzlichen Brief schreiben, man wird noch einige Male sagen: Der arme Just, seine arme Mutter, was wird sie jetzt wohl anfangen? und dann vergessen. Man wird....ich werde." This sense of justice was supplemented by a love for humanity that grew with her until it has become the dominant note in all her works.

As she grew older, she began to think for herself. Religious doubts, doubts as to the very existence of everything but herself, possessed her. In "Schattenleben" she recalls her contact as a child with the Absolute Ego theory of Fichte and her attempts to prove it: "Ich weiss, dass ich Jahre lang den Zweifel in mir trug, ob denn ausser mir noch etwas wirklich sei, ob ich nicht allein lebe, fühle, atme in einem ungeheuren Nichts..... Ich rannte zuweilen im Garten vorwärts, so rasch ich konnte, und wendete mich dann plötzlich um und meinte: einmal wirst du's erwischen, das Weisse, das Leere. Aber ich erwischte es nie, es war immer schneller als ich; eh' ich mich umsehen konnte, hatte die Decoration sich wieder aufgestellt".

At the death of her grandmother, Marie became possessor of her grandmother's books. She was hungry for something to read, so she began at once. She tried to understand the Book of Revelations in her grandmother's Bible. Because she could not, she grew more and more discouraged. The story of Lessing's precocious youth, too, made her despair of ever becoming the great writer she hoped to be. She wrote a little poem:

"Ich bin ein Nichts für meinen Gott,  
Für meinen Nächsten bin ich klein,  
Mir selber dien' ich nur zum Spott,  
Wie könnt' ein Mensch noch ärmer sein?"

But gradually this depression wore off. She read continually. She began to admire Klopstock's Odes exceedingly, and her faith in God as a Creator and Father returned.

"Meine Kinderjahre" closes with the significant sentence:  
"Ich hatte gedacht und gelitten, - ich war kein Kind mehr."

At the age of eighteen she married a cousin, Baron Moriz von Ebner-Eschenbach, an instructor in the Ingenieur-Akademie in Vienna and a military man of note.

Before her marriage she had sent some of her poems to Grillparzer for criticism. His comments were very favorable, except that he said the poet showed lack of orderly thought. As a result Marie began to study as never before, Greek, Latin, science, and literature - studies reserved for the boys. Though of an active, rather restless nature, preferring riding and shooting and outdoor sports to study, she learned to subject desire to will. In her stories and aphorisms when she holds up the ideal of self-restraint, it is as one who knows, as one who has had to learn it himself. Art to her is a calling, worthy of the greatest sacrifices.

Her early works, dramas, were unsuccessful and were subjected to severe criticism. Like many successful novelists, she turned to the novel late in life, - she was just forty-five years of age, - and it was a few years later that her friendship with Louise von Francois began. Pessimism was the popular trend in philosophy. Evidently Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach was yielding to this pessimistic tendency in her early stories, for Louise von Francois in a letter of February 20, 1880<sup>1</sup> criticises

1. Anton Bettelheim: Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach.  
Biographische Blätter. p.105.



the stories "Ein Spätgeborener" and "Chlodowig" because, as she says, "die Kraft zerschellt an der Schwäche." She goes on to say: "Wenn die Wirklichkeit so Niederschlagendes offenbart, die Kunst soll uns Erhebendes bringen, zumal in dieser Zeit des Pessimismus." This pessimistic note is entirely foreign to her later works. Reality is portrayed at times in all its awfulness, but the attitude toward it, that such is the way of the world, that we may as well sit down and fold our hands, since there is nothing better to do, is entirely lacking. Instead there is optimism, - the optimism that dares to look on the evil and believe in the ultimate supremacy of the good. About this time Turgenev, the Russian nobleman-novelist, was exerting a great influence all over Europe. Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach read much of his work but did not permit it to influence her. By that time she was beyond the fatalistic note with which he portrays life in his home-land. Bettelheim<sup>1</sup> says: "Ihr rigoristisches Sittengesetz hat nichts gemein mit seinem Fatalismus."

2

The years 1870 and 1871 saw the foundation of the German Empire, with Austria-Hungary a subject kingdom. New

1. Anton Bettelheim: Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach.  
Biographische Blätter. p.152.

2. Friedrich Kummer: Deutsche Literatur-Geschichte des  
19ten Jahrhunderts. pp.488-91.

business sprang up, speculation became rife, the number of day-laborers increased while capital piled up as never before. In 1873 there was a panic, followed by a period of fear and distrust. This crisis was bridged over by commerce and trade at home and abroad. Gradually Germany changed from an agricultural to an industrial nation. In 1850 one fourth of the population of the empire lived in cities, in 1900 this number had increased to one half. With these industrial changes, social conditions became ripe for the spread of socialism. These social conditions account to no small degree, no doubt, for the strong social note in many of the novels of Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach. However, it is always the moral, not the political, value in socialistic doctrines that appeals to her.

Two other names remain to be mentioned here, two ethical philosophers of widely different stamp. For many summers before the death of Louise von Francois, she and Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach used to spend a portion of the summer together in St. Gilgen in north Austria. The place was something of a resort, and many of their friends also

lived there, - cultured men and women, some of them scientists and writers of note. Among them was Ida Fleischl. These three walked and talked much together. Of Ida Fleischl Bettelheim says: "(Sie) trieb philosophische und religionsgeschichtliche Studien, kannte ihren Spinoza gründlich und beschäftigte sich lebhaft mit buddhistischer Ethik, den Vedischen Hymnen und dem Brahmanismus." Aside from this one instance, no references occur as to Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach's knowledge of Spinoza's philosophy. No doubt she had read the great philosophers for herself, and one cannot force conclusions; nevertheless, Spinoza's ideas of God and of virtue and of freedom from emotion through an intellectual attitude toward the universe would prepare the way for a leaning toward theories such as propounded by the American ethical writer, William Mackintire Salter. While lecturer for the Society for Ethical Culture of Chicago, he delivered the lectures found in his book called "Ethical Religion", which was first published in English in 1889. In 1885 some of these same lectures were translated into German and published under the title of

<sup>1</sup>  
"Die Religion der Moral". This book very evidently deeply impressed Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach. The views expressed in it and similar ideas in Marie von Ebner's novels after 1885 will be considered later. Suffice it here to say that she not only read the book herself, but she also recommended it to her friends and discussed it with them. Louise von Francois, like herself, was much interested in ethics. Bettelheim says: "Unumwunden, wie über literarische, sprach sich die Francois auch über philosophische und religiöse Dinge aus. Auf alles Ethische war sie 'wie ein Vogel' und der Amerikaner Salter, auf den sie von der Ebner hingewiesen wurde, gab Anlass zu weit ausgreifenden, tiefgründenden Bekenntnissen".

Marie von Ebner has never travelled much. The only journey she has ever made outside of Austria-Hungary was one to Rome, where she stayed from 1898 to 1900. On her return all Vienna joined in the celebration of her seventieth birthday. Letters and gifts came from writers of note all over Germany and Austria. The University of Vienna conferred on her the degree of Doctor of Philosophy *honoris causa*, - the first time this degree was ever given

1. Translated by Professor Doctor Georg von Gizycki, Leipzig and Berlin. See footnote to page ii of the preface to the second edition of "Ethical Religion".

to a woman by that institution.

The tendency in modern German thought to which Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach's moral philosophy is most obviously opposed is that of pessimism. In her aphorisms she says: "Die jetzigen Menschen sind zum tadeln geboren. Vom ganzen Achilles sehen sie nur die Ferse"; or "Die glücklichen Pessimisten. Welche Freude empfinden sie, so oft sie bewiesen haben, dass es keine Freude gibt". At a time when men were doubting the value of life and the worth of humanity in general, she wrote her books, which are filled with optimistic love for and faith in mankind. At a time when philosophers were declaring pain with brief intervals of pleasure to be the content of existence, through the medium of the novel and story she gave to the world evidence of her belief in the unsurpassed joy of a moral life, basing her belief on a keen insight into human nature. In opposition to Schopenhauer's doctrine of the will being determined by the character of the person, she says: "So weit Deine Selbstbeherrschung geht, so weit geht Deine Freiheit", and she gives us in her novels many examples of the reconstruction of the character by means

of the will. If there is anything determined in her philosophy, it is the belief that in every person there is the moral impulse that enables him to see the good and to reach out toward it.

The milieu theory<sup>1</sup>, that heredity and environment determine absolutely the actions of an individual, and that crime is the necessary, unavoidable result of certain given conditions, is a product of pessimism which Zola and the French writers following him introduced into the novel. "Das Gemeindegeld" attempts to prove the opposite with its theme of moral attainment in spite of heredity and environment. Although Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach never isolates her characters from their environment, still she never allows environment to determine the character. In this sense one might call her an individualist, but her individualism is always characterised by a classic moderation.

Another tendency to which Marie von Ebner stands opposed is that of realism in art that descends to the disagreeable, the sordid, the mean. She loves reality, her characters are realists. They are men of action, intent

1. Carl Schmidt: Der moderne Roman. pp.246-7.

on the doing of concrete things, not on reasoning and contemplation, but they also have high moral ideals. It is this fact, together with her artistic sense, that insures Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach against the sordid realism of much of the modern fiction. According to Moritz Necker,<sup>1</sup> the less other novelists have heeded moral ideals, the stronger she has made the ethical note in her work. "Man strebte auch andere Ziele als die ältesten Künstler an: nicht mehr Schönheit, sondern nur Wahrheit... Da trat sie mit ihrem grossen Menschenglauben, mit ihrer Kraft des Willens hervor, und hielt durch Wort und Tat den Glauben an Güte und Schönheit lebendig".

1. Moritz Necker: Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach. Nach ihren Werken geschildert. pp.227-8.

METHODS EMPLOYED IN PRESENTING  
ETHICS IN HER NOVELS AND STORIES.

If we are convinced of the legitimacy of the ethical in art, and if a certain work grips us and holds us through its powerful treatment of some moral question, we naturally ask ourselves: how is it done? The mere statement of a moral problem produces no more effect than those so-called religions that have set up platitudes without the dynamic of a great personality back of them. Just so, it is the author back of his work that makes his message vital to us. In other words, those pieces of literature that impress us with the right of one mode of conduct and the wrong of another, contain the essence of the author's<sup>1</sup> personality. For what he feels, he must express, and what he does not feel, he cannot make us feel. The novels, poems, and aphorisms of Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach all reveal her personality. One of the elements of this personality is her understanding of human nature. In one of her aphorisms she

1. The following discussion is based on a lecture by Oscar Firkins on ethics in literature.



says: "Ein Dichter, der einen Menschen kennt, kann hundert schildern". Though of the nobility, she knows the villagers and farmers and day-laborers as well as the Viennese aristocracy. Sport-countesses, society matrons, court officials, parish priests, country doctors, watch-makers, village school-masters, serving-maids are all equally interesting to her, because they are all human. "Sie sucht alles auf's Menschliche zu stellen", according to Gabrielle Reuter in "Die Dichtung". In one of her "Spruchversen" she says:

"Verständniss für jedwedes Leid,  
Erbarmen mild mit jedem Fehle;  
Daran in dieser Zeitlichkeit,  
Erkennst Du die erwählte Seele".

As one who understands humankind, largely through her love of humankind, (just as she insists that one must believe in the good to make it live), she herself is an "erwählte Seele".

As a result of her keen insight into human nature, her characters are very human, and they, too, reflect her ethics. Our sympathies are directed invariably toward the good in their personalities and in their conduct. If they commit a wrong, we feel with them: would that it

had not been done. There are very few out-and-out bad characters in Marie von Ebner's stories, not because they are unknown to her, but because she looks for some good in everyone and finds it. In "Palemon", one of her parables, she puts into the mouth of a painter a sentence that fitly describes her own purpose: "Ich erhebe den Anspruch auf treue Wiedergabe der Natur, ...wenn es mir gelingt, überzeugend darzustellen, was ich allein gesehen habe: einen edlen Zug im Angesicht der Verworfenen, einen Blitz des Geistes im Auge des Einfältigen".

Another way in which she produces a moral effect is by showing that joy follows right conduct, and misery, wrong-doing. "The wages of sin is death" is a law of life, but death may mean the loss of mental or spiritual values as well as physical. In fact, in her stories wrong-doing is followed, not by a series of misfortunes, as if inflicted by an outraged Providence, but by the remorse of the sinner or by a loss of his higher self. Marie Dornach in "Unsühnbar" is her own judge and suffers under her own verdict more than any externally imposed punishment could possibly cause her to suffer. Hermann Halwig in "Lotti, die Uhrmacherin", though

once a priest of the true and the beautiful in literature, sells his soul to his publishers, when in need of money, and cannot rise again to his old ideals when the need is removed. Leo Klinger in "Glaubenlos?", in his quest after the truth, concludes that the only hell there is, is that in the hearts of men. Any number of such illustrations could be given. Just so the good are happy. However, the terms "goodness" and "happiness", as applied to Marie von Ebner's works have a larger meaning than the ordinary use of the terms implies, and we will leave this point to the discussion of the good.

The easiest and most common way of presenting a moral lesson in a novel is, of course, by preaching, whether in a paragraph or in a single sentence. It goes without saying, perhaps, that true literature carefully seeks to avoid any obvious forcing of moral views. Feeling against it is stronger today than ever before. Nevertheless, the use of the precept or moral injunction was used by no lesser writers than Goethe, Shakespeare, Schiller, Milton, Browning, and Tennyson. Marie von Ebner's works are by no means free from precepts. One who writes aphorisms such

that they are quoted everywhere, even as these of Goethe are, has a power of expression not common to most writers. Those who think hard usually think in aphorisms. The more gifted the thinker is in the art of apt expression, the more widely known and appreciated are his sayings. On the title page to her aphorisms, Marie Ebner has added this definition of an aphorism: "Ein Aphorismus ist der letzte Ring einer langen Gedankenkette". As a result, her novels contain precepts. However, there are few of them which are not spoken by characters in the stories, who under stress of feeling break forth with a general truth, which, far from being open to criticism, reveals the character and state of mind of the person admirably. Seldom does she obtrude her own thought on a subject; when she does, it comes with striking force and usually contains the key to the understanding of the whole story. One example of this is the following sentences in "Nach dem Tode": "Die alten Leute verstehen eben die jungen nicht mehr. Sie wissen nicht, wie die gepanzert sind, inwendig, auswendig, durch und durch, mit einem trefflichen Harnisch: Gleichgültigkeit!"

In summing up we find that in her novels and

stories her ethics are impressed on the reader for the most part through the realisation of a personality with high ideals back of the characters, through the sympathy he feels for the good in the characters, through the sound and vital principle of life embodied in the stories that evil-doing means loss and right-doing gain, and through the express statement of a moral principle. The first three methods are always present in a story with ethical import. The fourth is not so common, but neither is it nearly so important as the other three. We are now ready to consider the themes of some of her stories in detail.

ETHICAL THEMES OF  
SEPARATE NOVELS AND STORIES.

It will be impossible here to consider everything ethical in the novels and stories reviewed. What is essential, however, is to determine the most important ethical truth in each. The title of the story will often indicate where the author wishes to lay greatest stress. If the title is the name of or denotes one of the characters, then our chief interest will rest with that character, as is the case in "Das Gemeindegeld" or "Der Kreisphysikus"; if the title is the expression of some idea or theme contained in the novel, then we will be interested, not so much in the characters, as in the development of that theme.

Marie von Ebner has written two poems with somewhat similar content that will serve admirably to explain the ethical import of her stories; one is called "St. Peter und der Blaustrumpf", the other, "Isabella". Both the "Blaustrumpf" and Isabella wait at the gate of heaven for

admittance. The "Blaustrumpf" is refused, simply because she is a blue-socking, and Isabella is refused because she would not believe in hell. The blue-socking pleads:

"Wär' Dir bekannt mein Lebenslauf,  
Du wüsstest, dass in sel'gen Stunden  
Ich meinen Herrn und Gott gefunden".

The gate-keeper demands "Allwo? - Sprich klar"; and she replies:

"Dasselbst, wo ich zu Hause war,  
Mein Handwerk brachte das mit sich,  
Im Menschenherzen. Wunderlich  
War dort der Höchste wohl umgeben;  
Oft blieb von seines Lichtes Weben  
Ein glimmend Fünklein übrig nur,  
Und führte doch auf Gottes Spur".

When Isabella is asked in what she did believe, if not in hell, she replies:

"Herr, mein Gott, woran ich glaubte  
War gewiss das Unerlaubte.  
An die Menschen, nicht an Hölle,  
Glaubt' ich, Törrin Isabella".

Both Isabella and the blue-stockings are admitted to heaven.

Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach is convinced of the presence of a divine spark in every human being; her novels and stories are demonstrations of that fact. In ethical phraseology, the fundamental idea of each one is self-realisation; one or more characters in the story find themselves, that is, they advance from a more or less limited outlook on life to a realisation of goods of which they had never dreamed before. What has changed them? They themselves, because of some "göttliches Fünkeln" that made them respond to a greater good.

To say that this same idea of self-realisation is the foundation of all her stories may seem to denote stupid uniformity and want of variety, but such is far from the truth. There are just as many greater goods in the world as there are people, - there are just as many ways of self-realisation as there are selves to realise. This fact precludes all possibility of sameness. The greater good to which a character can attain is the good for him simply because his nature is as it is. John Dewey says:<sup>1</sup> "A moral law is thoroughly individualised. It cannot be for one act

1. John Dewey: Outlines of a Critical Theory of Ethics. p.179.



just what it is for another. The ethical world is too rich in capacity and circumstance to permit of monotony; it is too swift in its movement to allow of bare repetition. It will not hold still; it moves on, and moral law is the law of action required from individuals by this movement." To be sure, the fact is by no means obvious that all the stories have this similar ethical theme. From the purely literary point of view they are vastly different. One could classify them then in several ways; for instance, according as they portray the village folk, or Viennese society, or the poorer class of city-dwellers. Then each class would be distinct from the other. From the ethical stand-point, if one observes long and closely enough, one can see that self-realisation is the theme of all. It has seemed well to anticipate the discussion of the nature of the good thus far, in order that this fact may grow clearer, as we review the events and meet the characters in the separate stories.

Let us begin with "Das Gemeindegeld", which is probably the best known of all her works. Pavel Holub and his little sister Milada are left alone in the world,-

indeed, they are worse than alone. Their father, a drunken sot, has killed the village priest and rebbed the church altars. For this he is hanged, although at the trial he insists that, not he, but his wife, committed the crime. His meek little wife, who fears her husband more than death, will only reply to questions as to her guilt: "Wie der Mann sagt. Was der Mann sagt". Accordingly, though quite innocent, she is sent to prison for ten years. Pavel and Milada are left worse than orphans. They have no relatives, and apparently no one will take them. In his dilemma the mayor of the parish of Soleschau takes them to the castle of the baroness of the parish estate. She, at first, will hear nothing of them. "Um die Kinder der Strolche, die einen braven Pfarrer erschlagen haben, kümmer' ich mich nicht". Finally, however, she decides to keep Milada, and Pavel becomes a "Gemeindekind". The customary procedure in such a case is for the child to stay for a while at each of the homes in the parish; but no one wants Pavel, so he is entrusted to the village herdsman, Virgil, and his wife, two of the most disreputable characters of the parish. To have given over to them any other child than Pavel would

not have occurred to the council, but with Pavel it is different. There is nothing in him to spoil. A third member of the herdsman's family is his pretty daughter Vinska.

For a time Pavel and Milada miss each other sadly. Pavel makes a bold attempt to rescue his sister, according to his view-point, and with characteristic Slavic stubbornness, he will say nothing in his own defense. All sorts of evil motives are ascribed to his act: "Einbrechen wahrscheinlich oder Feuer anlegen; dem Kerl ist Alles zuzutrauen". His punishment is a whipping by the school-master, Felix Habrecht, in the presence of all the school-children. Even Habrecht is severe with Pavel at first, but he is the first to find anything good in the boy at all and later becomes his one and only friend.

Although the parish is supposed to be supporting Pavel, their gifts to him are few and far between. He runs about in rags, sullen and unapproachable. The only one who can do anything with him is Vinska, and her influence is far from good. He is given a pair of boots by Habrecht for attendance in school eight days in succession. Vinska asks where he has stolen them, and when he tells her the school-

master has given them to him, she laughs and says: "Ja, ja! was der Lehrer schenkt, hält sich nicht über Nacht. Du weißt ja, dass er ein Hexenmeister ist". Because he was once thought to be dead and woke up again in the coffin shortly before the burial was to take place, Habrecht has the reputation among the superstitious village-folk of being in league with the devil. Any kind act that he may do or any attempt on his part to bring about some reform, however small, is promptly discredited and ascribed to evil designs. He must even keep his Latin books under the floor of his room and read them by stealth, lest the people think they are books on magic.

Pavel attends school very irregularly and works in the tile-works instead. The other children are much younger than he, they tease him about his father and mother, and he does not care much about studying anyway. One day he learns that Milada has gone to a convent to become a nun. All his hopes of seeing her now are destroyed. As he lies in the grass, thinking of how little life is worth to him, the school-master comes upon him. Thinking the boy is up to some mischief again, he demands of him what he is doing.

Again Pavel obstinately maintains silence. The schoolmaster strikes him, only to regret it a moment later. "Pavel", he says, "um Gottes willen, ich hör' nur Schlimmes von Dir - Du bist auf einem schlechten Weg; was soll aus Dir werden?" Only after Habrecht has repeated his question, does Pavel reply: "Ein Dieb". A few days later, because Vinska asks him to and because her beauty attracts him, he steals some of the peacocks' feathers from the castle park, and when caught and questioned, he takes all the blame himself. However, when he discovers that she has given the feathers to Peter, the landlerd's son, to gain his good graces, Pavel decides to have nothing more to do with her.

No one expects anything good from Pavel, and he apparently does his best to live up to his reputation. Finally, though Milada's benefactress, the baroness, is much opposed to it, Pavel obtains permission to see Milada. This meeting is what sets Pavel to thinking. Milada tells him how she hopes, by a saintly life in the convent, to atone for the guilt of her parents. "Es ist schwer, die Bravste zu sein, weil so viele gute Kinder da sind; aber

ich bin's doch!" she says and then asks, "Du bist es auch?" "Ich?" Pavel answers in confusion, "wie soll denn ich brav sein...Warum soll ich nichts Unrechtes tun?" Slowly, however, a desire to be like Milada grows in him. He tells her it is hard to be good in the village and begs to stay at the convent to tend the cows and oxen, if nothing else. But this is not permitted, and, after a touching scene of parting in which Milada's sympathies overwhelm her and she cries: "Lassen Sie mich! Ich will mit ihm gehen, weil er arm ist, weil er ein Dieb ist...ich will nicht eine Heilige sein und in den Himmel kommen, wenn er in die Hölle kommt", Pavel starts back to Soleschau. His feelings are all aroused. Milada's unselfishness, first in wishing to atone for her parents' guilt and then in her desire to leave all, her friends, her good clothes and plenty to eat, and go with him, quite overwhelms him. He determines to show himself worthy of her love. Some strange, new emotion rises in him. It is so new, so strange that he cannot name it, yet he knows it makes him happy. It seems to tell him of new and wonderful experiences. As he walks along toward home, he becomes more and more convinced, "dass er einer grossen

Veränderung seines Schicksals entgegen gehe, dem geheimnissvollen Anfang zu einem schöneren, besseren Leben".

The resolve to begin a new life is the result of his visit to Milada and of the evidences of her love and unselfishness. He begins to see that, although those about him treat him unjustly and refuse to interpret his good intentions aright, that is no reason why he should not live a good life. He sees that there is a good beyond merely gaining the good-will of the villagers, namely, that of a good life. It is this thought that keeps him firm in his resolve. He himself has been the cause of some of the distrust and ill-treatment he has received. That he can remove. So far as his parents have brought it on him, he can only give evidence of his own worthiness and leave the rest to the people themselves; as one of the aphorisms says: "Der Wohlwollende fürchtet Missgunst nicht".

The rest of the novel shows how Pavel carries out his resolve. He goes to live with the school-master until he has saved enough to buy a few acres and build a little house of his own; but still he has much with which to contend. The ill-will of the villagers does not abate,-

rather it increases because of envy at Pavel's perseverance and modest success. This ill-will finally comes to a head, and Pavel is forced to settle it in a hand-to-hand fight in which all his chief enemies take part. With a strength born of a strong sense of the injustice that has been done him all his life, he shows them that he is master of the situation and quite able to take care of himself. From this time on, life becomes more pleasant, so far as his treatment by the villagers is concerned. However, Habrecht, the school-master, who has gone to another village to teach because he could no longer stand the suspicions of the people of Soleschau, finds that the stories of his witchcraft have followed him even to his new home, and he decides to go to America. His farewell speech to Pavel is significant in many ways. In the first place, his reason for going to America is that he has read a book, like which "noch nie eines geschrieben wurde". This book told him of an ethical society, whose purpose was the propagation of moral culture and which was daily winning new members and influence. "Bekenner einer Religion der Moral nennen sie sich", he tells Pavel; "ich nenne sie die Entzünder und Hüter des heiligsten



Feuers, das je auf Erden brannte, und dessen Licht bestimmt ist, 'auf dem Antlitz der menschlichen Gemeinde den Widerschein einer edlen, bisher fremden Freudigkeit wachzurufen". This evidence is very evidently to the Society for Ethical Culture in America and to the book "Die Religion der Moral" by Wm. M. Salter, who has been lecturer and enthusiastic supporter of the Society for years. The significance of this reference we shall consider later under the discussion of the ethics of Ebner-Eschenbach. Another important fact about this farewell speech is that through it for the first time Pavel gets an idea of himself as a social self. So far he has learned to know the value of a moral life; he has realised himself in so far as he has resolved to refrain from wrong-doing in his own life. Complete self-realisation is possible only in society. This social sense is quite lacking in Pavel. Rather than any altruistic ideas or motives, he has only hatred and contempt for those who have caused him so much suffering. Habrecht's speech at least gives him new ideas, full of wonderful possibilities. Habrecht asks how he is getting along. Pavel tells him things are going much better since

he thrashed his enemies in the inn. "Nun, lieber Mensch," Habrecht replies, "Prügel sind nicht schlecht, aber nur für den Anfang, durchaus nur! und überhaupt nie mehr als ein Palliativ... Von Vernunft- und Gemeinde wegen, hätte ein schlechter Kerl aus Dir werden müssen; statt dessen bist Du ein tüchtiger geworden. Mach' so fort, schlag' ihnen ein Schnippchen ums andere. Arbeite Dich hinauf zum Bauer; werde ihr Bürgermeister". Pavel opens his eyes wide in astonishment at the inconceivableness of the idea. "Ja, ja! und wenn Du's bist, dann zahl' ihnen mit Gutem heim, was sie Uebles an Dir getan haben". The whole speech is valuable. The following separate sentences have been chosen as a further statement of the social ethics which Habrecht felt was the best thing he had to leave with Pavel at parting and which, one feels, must express the sentiments of the author as well: "Wir leben in einer vorzugsweise lehrreichen Zeit. Nie ist den Menschen deutlicher gepredigt worden: Seid selbstlos, wenn aus keinem edleren, so doch aus Selbsterhaltungstrieb.... In früheren Zeiten konnte Einer ruhig vor seinem vollen Teller sitzen und sich's schmecken lassen, ohne sich darum zu kümmern, dass der Teller seines Nachbars

leer war. Das geht jetzt nicht mehr, ausser bei den geistig völlig Blinden. Allen Uebrigen wird der leere Teller des Nachbarn den Appetit verderben- dem Braven aus Rechtsgefühl, dem Feigen aus Angst...Darum Sorge dafür, wenn Du Deinen Teller füllst, dass es in Deiner Nachbarschaft so wenig leere als möglich gibt...Nicht Jeder braucht einen Hausstand zu gründen; das ist der grösste Wahn, dass man einige Kinder haben müsse - es giebt Kinder genug auf der Welt...und je besser ein Vater ist, desto weniger hat er von seinen Kindern - wer fühlt edel und selbstlos genug, um sich zutrauen zu dürfen, er werde ein guter Vater sein?" Just as some people turn their backs on idealism and regard it as fit only for dreamers, Habrecht fears Pavel will regard these fundamental ideas as far beyond him; and he tells him not to argue thus: "wir sind geringe Leute; für uns ist auch eine geringe Moral gut genug....Ich sage Dir, gerade die beste ist für Euch die rechte". Pavel returns home, digs up the stone he had buried in his dooryard in token of a promise to himself, that none of the villagers shall ever cross his threshold, and throws it into the well.

Not long after Milada dies. Pavel is heart-broken.

The same day that he hears of her death, his mother returns to Soleschau after ten years' imprisonment. Even Pavel has always thought she was guilty of a part of the crime at least, but he has always planned, too, for her home-coming; now, when he learns that she has suffered, though innocent, he is more than glad that he has a home for her. At first she will not stay, because she feels she will only put him to shame before the eyes of the world. He pleads with her: "Die Aergsten werden oft die Besten, wenn sie Einen brauchen. Nun, liebe Mutter, das müsst' doch curios zugehen, wenn man zwei Menschen, wie wir sind, nicht manchmal brauchen sollte. Bleibt bei mir, liebe Mutter", and she stays. The social self in Pavel is realised,- he has found himself.

The two chief factors in Pavel's self-realisation are Milada and Habrecht. In Milada's saintly life and in her faith in him he finds an ideal that means a reconstruction of his inner life. But Milada is remote from the world. In Habrecht's crude but sound philosophy the more complete ideal of the altruistic, social individual, who covets the opportunity of a moral life for others as well

as for himself, is presented to him. His awakened social instinct finds its first expression in the reception into his home of his supposedly guilty mother. Since man often clings most tenaciously to an ideal when resistance is offered, the obstacles placed in Pavel's way by the villagers after his visit to Milada may be regarded as a third, but negative factor in his self-realisation.

The idea of self-realisation is no less the fundamental ethical theme of "Der Kreisphysikus" than it is of "Das Gemeindegeld". Here the central figure is the Jewish district-physician, Nathanael Rosenzweig. From a boyhood of privation he has learned the value of money, and at the opening of the story his world of activity consists of making money, and more money, for an old grandmother and himself. He loves his profession, but its chief value to him lies in the money it brings in. He sees everything in terms of money. As he rides along at night through snow-covered fields, he admires the broad white expanse because it is like a huge, newly-coined piece of silver. From such a character to one who uses his profession untiringly as a means of serving others who have

need of him, and who finds his supreme happiness therein, seems a great change, but such is the experience of Dr. Rosenzweig. Let us see how the author produces this change. In the first place, as Dr. Rosenzweig is riding home late one cold winter night, he finds a boy, lying in the snow, almost frozen. The doctor's instinct in him impels him to revive the boy and to take him home with him. He does not intend to keep the boy, but, as there seems to be nothing else to do, he permits him to stay as general chore-boy. Thus the first new factor is introduced into the doctor's life, and a factor very much in need of help. He is harsh with Joseph, requires much of him, but pays him nothing. The next factor in the self-realisation of the doctor is the death of his grandmother; "das einzige ideale Gut, das er besessen hatte, die Zuneigung dieser Frau, war für immer dahin und er, als ein bejahrter Mann - allein". For the first time in his life he looks back over his past life. Much has been accomplished, but nothing without a thought of his old grandmother. Now she is gone, and he is left alone, with no one in the world to provide for but himself. The fact that there may be others whom he can help,

or to whom he owes something as a fellow-member in society, does not occur to him.

The first two factors in his self-realisation are purely negative; that is, they do not contribute directly to the change in him, they merely prepare the way for positive influences. The third step, however, means a positive advance toward the higher good, and consists of a friend's undeserved praise of Dr. Rosenzweig for his kindness in giving Joseph a good home. He goes on a professional visit to the castle of a Polish baroness and is greeted heartily with the words: "Von Amts wegen sind Sie ein tüchtiger Kreisphysikus, zum Samariter macht Sie Ihr eigenes Herz". One of the aphorisms says: "Der Glaube an das Gute ist es, der das Gute lebendig macht". Here is an illustration of the truth of the statement. Now Dr. Rosenzweig begins to realise that, though his grandmother is dead, there may be others for whom he should provide. Nor will he have to look far. Instead of giving Joseph a good home, he has only made a hard-working servant of him, - a servant without pay. At first he resents the undeserved praise, but at the same time the thought comes to him, that he will give Joseph a new suit

of clothes instead of the cast-offs he is wearing.

That this third factor, however, would not have sufficed to work a permanent change in Dr. Rosenzweig is evident from what follows his visit to the baroness. That night he walks home alone, dissatisfied with everyone and everything in general. "Er, der trocken, auf seinen Vorteil bedachte Nathanael Rosenzweig - ein Menschenfreund und Samariter?" and he recognises his short-comings: "Nie hast du geholfen ausser im Beräuf. Und was wir dem zu Liebe tun, tun wir uns selbst zu Liebe. Seine Schuldigkeit - es liegt schon im Worte - ist nur ein Tausch. Mehr als getauscht hatte er nie". But instead of yielding to this new altruism, he persuades himself that he has given his time and energy for the money and respect of his fellow-men, and that therein he has done all that is necessary.

Thus the introduction of a fourth factor is imperative. This fourth factor is the eloquence and personal example of the Sendbote. The time of the story is 1846, the year of the Galician Revolution. In that year, according to history, the Sendbote, Eduard Dembowski, came from Poland into Galicia to stir up the wealthy Poles there to help free



themselves from bondage and oppression. He is said to have had marvelous eloquence of speech. This historical character Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach has introduced into the story. Having no sympathy with the agitator, but curious as to his power over the people, Dr. Rosenzweig decides to order the carriage and go to hear him speak. Joseph has gone to sleep on his straw-mat in the only shabby room in the house. For the first time since the boy's arrival, Dr. Rosenzweig enters this room, and in the midst of the dingy surroundings, something of his injustice to the boy comes over him. "Ein Schwindel ergriff ihn, ihm war, als wanke sein Haus".

The Sendbote addresses a large audience in coarse peasant's costume. A burst of applause greets him. "Freunde, Brüder", he begins in a quiet, impressive way, "ich grüsse Euch zum letzten Male vor dem Kampf, vielleicht zum letzten Male vor dem Tode". He tells them there <sup>are</sup> victories to gain besides those on the battle-field. Some men have died, leaving nothing behind but the memory of their death, Now those who have sworn allegiance to the cause of freedom must leave a glorious inheritance behind them. Each must be a priest, whose ambition is self-denial and boundless devotion

to God's cause. The Sendbote knows whereof he speaks, for he was once a Polish count, who, like many another, lived only for pleasure. The laborers on his estate were being whipped and worked and starved to death, but that was nothing to him. Finally, however, several experiences brought him to a realisation of his responsibility for much of the suffering about him. He prayed to God for power to make amends, gave all he had to the poor, and set out, almost penniless, to preach the doctrine of love for one's fellow-men.

The living example of altruism in the Sendbote and his plea for sympathy and love and unselfishness among men fairly overwhelms Dr. Rosenzweig. Though his thoughts as he looked down on Joseph, asleep on the straw-mat, prepared him for this message of altruism; but they were as nothing compared to the feelings of mingled joy and shame that come to him now. "Ein unermessliches Glück durchdrang ihn, er empfand die höchste aller Wonnen - die Wonne, aus den beengenden Schranken der Selbstsucht aufzusteigen wie aus einem Grabe. Was er bisher am meisten geschätzt hatte, erschien ihm wertlos....Beschämung erfüllte seine Seele, aber mit Entzücken gab er sich ihr hin als dem Wahrzeichen

seiner Wandlung, dem Beginn seines inneren Wachsens und Klärens".

An evidence of his complete change of attitude toward the Sendbote, from that of a scoffer to a sympathizer, is given that very night, when, to save the Sendbote from arrest, he conceals him in his carriage. The next day he pays Joseph all he has earned in the years he has worked for him. In reply to Joseph's surprise and gratitude he says: "Gäh' es Viele Deinesgleichen, dann wäre der himmlische Sendbote - kein Tor".

Not long afterwards the revolution begins. The Sendbote himself takes part. After it is over, he can be found nowhere, and everyone gives him up for dead.

Five years pass by, and one day Dr. Rosenzweig finds him, living the life of a simple peasant with his wife and children near the Silesian border. From a fiery agitator for the down-trodden peasantry, he has become one of them. He has come to realize that one man cannot transform, in one short struggle against authority, conditions that have existed for centuries. If a change is to come, it must come through the gradual betterment of the envi-

ronment and standards of the peasantry. The Sendbote himself has learned the lesson of his inadequacy as an agitator for the lower classes and of their real need, day by day, of a living example. Through tireless, unselfish acts of kindness and of love, he hopes to do his share toward the betterment of conditions among them. His only regret is that his work as agitator has been so completely in vain. "Der Sendbote ist gestorben, ohne einen Jünger zu hinterlassen". "Einen doch!" Dr. Rosenzweig replies, "Einen, den Sie aus den Reihen Ihrer eifrigsten Gegner geholt. Einen Mann, dessen Zwecke irdischer Natur gewesen, dessen Herz an verlierbaren Gütern gehangen und den Sie den Wert der unverlierbaren kennen gelehrt haben. Sendbote! da steht er vor Ihnen, Ihr Jünger in weissen Haaren".

The process of Dr. Rosenzweig's self-realisation is accomplished through the boy Joseph, whose meek acceptance of unjust treatment is the cause of the first altruistic impulses in the doctor, through the death of the grandmother, which leaves a vacancy in his life, through the positive agencies of undeserved praise and the Sendbote's eloquence. The process is, of course, subjective,

but external means must be used in this novel to bring it about.

In "Glaubenslos?", as the title indicates, the reader's interest is centered, not so much in anyone character, as in the fact that a person can find his highest moral good independent of religious dogma. In the author's treatment of this theme one is reminded more than once of Wm.M.Salter's "Ethical Religion". "Glaubenslos?" contains several ideas vital to a study of the author's ethics.

If one were to sum up the theme of the novel in a few words, it would be: the inherent good in humanity. The character, Leo Klinger, though he doubts the doctrines of the church, finds himself when he learns to recognise the existence of this inherent good. As he expresses the theme of the story: "Glauben ist mehr als Wissen, und glauben können ist das höchste Glück".

The plot of "Glaubenslos?" is briefly as follows: Leo Klinger, a young assistant to the priest in the little Alpine village of Schran, finds such low standards of morality among the people there and such heedlessness

toward the teachings of the church, that he begins to doubt the efficacy and the very truth of Catholic dogma. Moreover, he has been studying astronomy and philosophy, and these studies only increase his doubts. He decides to go away and abandon the priestly calling, but Father Thalberg begs him to stay. The character of the Pfarrer is that of a kindly, fatherly sort of person who has never doubted. He says: "Ich bin ein Diener der Kirche, lieber Sohn, und ich glaube, was zu glauben die Kirche mir vorschreibt". Truth is his chief aim, but why seek it where it has long been found? "Die Wahrheit, die gut genug war für grosse Propheten, wird auch für Dich gut genug sein".

A family that Leo often visits is that of Ambros Kogler, a well-to-do farmer, who is brutal toward his wife and daughter, Vroni. His wife despises him, and Vroni fears him. He has been hurt in an accident, and before his death Leo has worked wonders in the attitudes of these three people toward each other. He does it through his unselfish "Menschenglauben". Though without faith in the church doctrine, he never gives up his faith in humanity. He has strength enough to believe in the good

even in Ambros Kogler, and he inspires the wife with this same faith. "Glauben ist mehr als Wissen, und glauben können ist das höchste Glück", he tells them. When Kogler promises Leo never to strike Vroni again, his wife laughs at him and says he has made that promise too often before. Then it is that Leo insists that she believe: "Ich sage nicht, Ihr seid ihm Glauben schuldig, ich sage, dass heißt, ich flehe: Schenkt ihm Glauben....Das Beste, das ein Mensch dem anderen geben kann, ist Vertrauen". The experiment works admirably, and a new happiness reigns in the Kogler household. Leo is happy, too, in having found what he was looking for, - the kernel of good in everyone. He finds that "Das Gute lebt im Menschen. Der Trieb zum Guten ist oft stärker in ihm als der Trieb zum Schlechten". At last Leo finds peace in the knowledge that his faith in mankind is not groundless, that there is something he can do for the villagers of Schran. "Sein Kampf war ausgekämpft. Ja denn! trösten, helfen, bessern. Hier leben und sterben, ungekannt, ungenannt im bergenden Schatten, in dem allein sein ganzes Wesen sich entfalten kann. Ein stiller Hüter an einer der unzähligen Quellen, aus denen Heil und Unheil in die Welt

fließt."

The theme of self-realisation could scarcely be more clearly expressed. Just as in the case of Dr. Rosenzweig or the Sendbote, Leo Klinger finds his own greatest good in his ardent desire that others may find their good. A question-mark may well stand after the word "Glaubenslos?" in the title of the novel.

Love plots are by no means common in Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach's stories, - that is, plots in which love between man and woman is the central theme. In "Lotti, die Uhrmacherin" a love episode forms one element in the growth of the character of Lotti. In the beginning of the novel, she is a modest, unassuming sort of person, whose happiest hours are those spent at clock-making - the profession of her father - and whose greatest treasure is a very valuable collection of old time-pieces, left to her by her father. Her thought as she looks at herself in the glass in the morning will serve as an indication of her meekness of character: "Es ist ein Glück, dass ich anderen anders vorkommen als mir selbst, sonst könnte mich niemand leiden". Her world is bounded by the walls of her small,



third-story rooms in the heart of Vienna. Here she lives alone with one servant.

Whereas in "Das Gemeindegeld" and "Der Kreisphysikus" self-realisation results from several external influences upon the character, in "Lotti, die Uhrmacherin" the process is wholly subjective. Into her little world enters, - or rather reenters - the writer, Hermann Halwig. Years before, as a young man of high ideals, he had loved Lotti, and they were to have been married. But being of an impulsive and selfish nature, he had tired of her and of her seemingly prosaic existence and had married a lady of rank. To satisfy the demands of his wife he must sell his books, and, consequently, instead of becoming the great writer he had hoped to be, he has become famous as the author of suggestive, ultra-naturalistic novels. He stills his conscience with the thought: "Kann ich dafür, dass die Menschen von jeher die Giftmischer besser zahlten als die Ärzte?....Wär's umgekehrt, ich reichte ihnen Arznei".

It is Lotti's opportunity, which no one but her own conscience points out to her, to save Halwig from

a ten-year contract for more such sensualistic novels as he has written before. This she can do only by selling the clock-collection and by giving Halwig the money. For a long time she is uncertain as to what to do; she seems to hear him say: "Du hast mich gekannt in meiner Reinheit, rette eine verlorene Seele!...Verloren, weil du dich von ihm gewandt. Du warst die Starke, und ich war schwach, du hättest mich nicht verlassen sollen. Aber du suchtest Ruhe, du rangst nach Frieden und gabst mich auf, und ich sank und sinke immer tiefer ohne dich...Beweine mich nicht nur - rette mich!"

The next day the collection is sold, and the money is sent to Halwig through his lawyer, so that he may not know whence it comes. Lotti's old love for Halwig no doubt influences her in her decision, but she has a deeper reason: "Ich tue nur was ich nicht lassen kann: ich gebe ein im Grunde doch entbehrliches Gut hin, um die Seele eines Menschen zu retten, der mir einst teuer war". The fact that she has done everything in her power to save a human soul to its higher strivings makes her happy "past all understanding", even though she learns later that her

sacrifice was in vain.

The dominant theme of the story is that high ideals in a human heart are worth more than all the material values in the world. The element of contrast forms the frame-work of the story, - a contrast between Lotti, who has grown into a fuller realisation of the highest values, and Halwig, who has proved a traitor to his better instincts and who must pay the penalty.

The self-realisation of Paul Sonnberg in "Nach dem Tode" is that of a blase member of society in a German capital city who becomes a thoughtful, unselfish, altruistic individual. With this finding of himself comes deep regret because of lost opportunities: "Du hast Unschätzbare besessen und nicht zu würdigen gewusst". As the title indicates, the cause of this great change in Paul's character is the knowledge of his love for his young wife, which comes only after her death. The theme of the story might well be expressed in the words of Leo Klinger in "Glaubensles?": "Die Toten sind oft mächtiger als die Lebendigen". The story is briefly as follows: Paul Sonnberg, leaving at home in Austria his parents and young

wife, whom he thinks he does not love, goes out in search of adventure. He finally settles down in a German city, where he is received into the diplomatic service and into court society. News comes to him of the death of Marie, his wife, and of the birth of a little girl, but he is apparently wholly indifferent to home ties and soon becomes engaged to the beautiful daughter of one of the leading families. She is rather a cold and haughty type of person, whom society has robbed of all originality. It is her boast that "um zu wissen, was an einem Menschen sei, brauche sie nur seine Equipage zu sehen".

A few years pass by in this way. Paul neither writes home nor hears anything of his parents. The first step in the change that comes over him is the result of a visit from an eccentric, opinionated, old neighbor of his father's, Baron Kamnitzky. Paul experiences a feeling of resentment as the baron ironically censures his indifference: "Freilich, freilich - die vielen Geschäfte, die vielen Reden über Menschenrechte, Freiheit, Bildung, Intelligenz! wie fände man da Zeit ein paar alte Leute zu beschwichtigen, die so töricht sind, in Sorge um Einen

zu vergehen...Die Gleichgültigkeit ist blöd, grausam, frech! geht an der Schönheit vorbei ohne Begeisterung, am Elend ohne Mitleid, am Grossen ohne Ehrfurcht, am Wunder ohne Andacht". But, as the baron's wrath subsides and his anxious concern for Paul's parents and his love and admiration for the dead Marie manifest themselves, Paul is touched <sup>to</sup> the quick. If this old man who has no relations with or obligations to Paul's family except those of a neighbor, cannot control his feelings at <sup>the</sup> thought of the death of Marie, and the grief and loneliness of the parents, how short he himself has come of his duty! Paul decides to go home for a visit at once, instead of waiting until he can take Thekla along.

The second step in Paul's growth of character is the result of all the combined influences in his old home. Old memories are revived, and long dormant sympathies are awakened. He finds everything sadly changed. His parents are old and feeble and quite incapable of managing a large estate. Gradually Paul learns that while Marie was alive, all went well. The laborers' dwellings were kept in repair, the school carefully supervised, and

the estate managed properly. Now that she is gone, everything is in the hands of an unscrupulous overseer. Paul realises how much there is to do and how much Marie has done. Marie had loved him. Unconsciously he compares her with Thekla. Thekla does not know how to love; it would be impossible to imagine her thinking of or serving others. Paul has come home only for a visit, and as yet he has no intention of not returning to the city.

The third and final step consists of Paul's resolve to free Thekla from the engagement, if she so desires, and to stay where he is needed. Thekla accepts his offer, and the last tie to the old life is broken. A life full of usefulness lies before him. A longing to make up for his indifference and neglect possesses him. A second visit from Baron Kamnitzky is a factor in this third step. He comes to dinner one evening and indulges in his favorite diversion, - a tirade against the government, in which he explicitly includes Paul: "Euch Alle mein' ich, politische Doctoren, Verjüngerer, Verbesserer des Staates, Baumeister.. ja saubere Baumeister!...Flicken einen Riss in der Mauer, reparieren am Dache und merken nicht, oder tun, als ob sie

nicht merkten - dass die Fundamente wanken". Paul, like Leo Klinger, resolves to be guardian over one small part of the world, that the foundations there may be sound. He has found new moral values, for his social, altruistic self has triumphed over the old, habitual, and selfish self.

Much like the character of Dr. Rosenzweig as he is first introduced to us, is that of Marie Lakomy, the beautiful, but self-satisfied and proud daughter of a village washerwoman, in "Die Unverstandene auf dem Dorfe". "Unterschätzt konnte sie werden, aber nicht gedemütigt". She always feels that she is a little better than the other villagers and keeps aloof from them. She loves the son of a wealthy farmer, who, however, marries as his father directs, and Marie, out of spite, becomes the wife of the head-groom of the castle. The latter turns out to be a spendthrift, who drinks and gambles in the tavern every night and contracts debts all over town. Marie's life is far from happy; one day her husband is killed while taming a horse, and Marie goes home to live with her mother again, more haughty and distant toward her neighbors than ever before.

The first step in the growth of her character, namely that of the loss of her conceit, is the result of undeserved praise, just as praise was the first positive factor in the development of Dr. Rosenzweig. A mere harmless coincidence gives rise to a rumor in the village which is by no means to Marie's credit. For the credence and spread of this rumor the priest openly condemns his congregation, and <sup>he</sup> praises Marie. This new experience of being the object of another's solicitude and interest, especially when she has brought on herself the dislike of the villagers by her air of superiority, is so strange to Marie that her feeling of self-sufficiency leaves her, - "sie fühlte ihre Stärke und ihren Stolz entschwinden. Ihr verschlossenes Herz hatte sich plötzlich geöffnet, und der Zweifel an sich selbst brach mit seinem Gefolge an Bangen und Zagen herein. Die unerhörte Verherrlichung, die sie erfahren hatte, war sie verdient? Konnte sie ihrer wert sein, die den Preis jeglichen Erdenglückes noch schuldig war, die ihn noch nicht bezahlt hatte in Liebe und Leid?" This is the beginning of the change in her character, due to the realization of praise undeserved.



The second step is the awakening of her social sense through her acquaintance with the new village schoolmaster. He is a man with high ideals, and at last Marie realises that here is a man who is her superior, to whom she must look up with admiration and respect. Toward him, at least, she can be only "demütig". Through him a vision of new, undreamed-of joy through service comes to her. She becomes his wife, to share in the work he has set for himself: "Er hatte keinen Ehrgeiz, oder den grössten, den keinen zu haben. Auf dem Dorfe wollte er seine Laufbahn beginnen und enden, und sie für eine siegreich zurückgelegte halten, wenn er einst die Kinder der Kinder, die jetzt auf den Schulbänken sassen, um einen Schritt vorwärts gebracht sähe". Then follows a speech by him to Marie that contains the very essence of Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach's ethical philosophy, and which therefore is of vital importance to the present study: "Vorwärts in der Einsicht, die zur Pflichttreue führt, zur Strenge gegen sich selbst und zur Verachtung der feigen trägen Schläfrigkeit im Denken und im Tun...Es gibt eine Entwicklung des Menschen, einen Fortschritt im Guten, und seine ge-

fährlichsten Feinde sind die, die ihn leugnen, Der Glaube an das Gute ist es, der das Gute lebendig macht, und in dem Zeichen dieses Glaubens werde ich kämpfen."

Perhaps the best known novel by Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach next to "Das Gemeindegeld" is "Unsühnbar". It is different from those already considered in that it treats of a new problem,- that of the woman who has lost her virtue. It does not seem consistent with Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach's optimism and faith in humanity to suppose that the title "Unsühnbar" expresses her attitude toward Marie Dornach's sin; for she portrays that character as making all amends possible to human powers. Evidently the title must be taken from the point of view of the sinner. From the reader's stand-point, she makes complete expiation for her wrong; to her, nothing in the world can atone for it.

The ethical theme of "Unsühnbar" is plainly the sovereignty of truth and the growth of the character of Marie Dornach as she comes to a realization of that principle. To the casual reader it may seem impossible to discover that Marie Dornach finds herself, but a review

of the events of the novel will serve to bring it out. Marie Wolfsberg, daughter of a Viennese noble family, loves a handsome count by the name of Tessin; but, persuaded by her father that he is unprincipled and unworthy of a good woman, she marries the highly esteemed, though not so outwardly attractive, Graf Hermann Dornach. It is well here to remember that in Germany, as well as in many other parts of Europe, marriages are frequently in accord with the wishes of the parents, even though love is not present. Consequently, we can scarcely regard Marie's marriage to Hermann Dornach, though she loves Count Tessin, as a weakness in her character. She and Hermann go to the country estate of Dornach, where, as time goes by, Marie learns to admire Hermann more and more. That the social sense is keen within her is shown by her sympathy and unceasing interest in the laborers on the estate. As she looked into their faces on her arrival at her new home, she had thought: "Was dich da anruft mit stummer und unbewusster Klage, das ist die nach Erlösung ringende ewige Dienstbarkeit. Wir die Herren, sie die Knechte. Darbend an Leib und Seele verdienen sie - unser Brot, mühen sich, zur

Erde gebeugt, jahrein, jahraus, damit unser Geist frei und unbehindert auffliegen könne bis an die Grenzen des Erkennens. Ohne ihre harte Arbeit keine Ruhe für uns, kein Gemuss, nicht Kunst, nicht Wissenschaft". Both she and Hermann are "Kinder der neuen Zeit, das Gefühl der Unerträglichkeit fremden Leids, fremder Not und ein heisser Drang, zu helfen" fills them both.

That a woman of such high ideals and altruistic impulses should lose her honor is scarcely conceivable. Indeed, the character of Marie has been criticised as inconsistent, to which criticism the author makes reply that she has taken her material from life. Marie's fall can only be explained by the fact that, though she is happy as Hermann's wife, she still loves Tessin and never voluntarily puts all thought of him out of her mind. On the contrary, after a year or so has passed and after she meets him again at a ball in Vienna, during which meeting he reveals to her his love for her and tells her her father dealt unjustly with him when he arranged her marriage with Hermann Dornach, - after this experience she thinks of him often. He is going to a diplomatic post in the Orient and asks for a farewell

interview with her, which she refuses. Then, instead of persisting in this attitude, she regrets that she was so harsh, so cold toward him. When she meets him unexpectedly in a lodge on the estate of Dornach and he pleads for a token of her love, she falls. "Zwei trunkene Menschen hatten kein Bewusstsein mehr von Ehre, Pflicht, und Treue, ihnen versank die Welt und jegliches Erinnern".

The rest of Marie's life is one protracted attempt to atone. A child is born, and Marie, deeming it a greater good to preserve her husband's happiness and faith in her than to procure for herself some degree of peace of mind by telling the truth, says nothing of her sin. Though she loves the truth, she must live a lie. As time goes on, she realizes that the noblest, best thing she possesses is her steadily increasing love for Hermann; but this fact only makes her sense of guilt harder to bear. She tries to convince herself that it would be foolish to believe "die Verwirrung eines Augenblicks könne nicht gesühnt werden durch ein ganzes Leben der Rechtschaffenheit und Pflichterfüllung", but all in vain.

When, not long after, Hermann and the older

child, Hermann's real son, are accidentally drowned, Marie tells everything. She is unwilling that the illegitimate child should inherit the property, but more than that, she longs to be once more in the realm of truth, even though it cost her all that life holds for her. She leaves Castle Dornach with her child and goes to the long deserted country estate of her father. After a time Hermann's relatives, who have taken possession of Dornach, beg her to come back, but she refuses. She finds that a terrible condition of morals exists at her father's estate, but much as she would better conditions, she cannot because she herself has fallen. Her gifts and little kindnesses are regarded by the peasants as acts prompted by a guilty conscience. "Sie konnte schenken; - raten, belehren, bessernd einwirken konnte sie, die Bemakelte, nicht. Um die Menschen zu ihrem wahren Heile zu führen, bedarf es einer reinen Hand". A dangerous fever overtakes her, and as she is dying, oppressed by the sense of sin still unatoned for, she says: "Alles verloren, - den Glauben an die Vorsehung... den Glauben selbst an meinen freien Willen... Und doch nur Einen Wunsch... O, hatte ich nie ein Unrecht getan!" She hears her father driving into the courtyard below and says: "Mein

armer Vater! Das Glück ist nicht, wo er es sucht. Gutsein ist Glück, einfach, selbstlos, und gut..."

In this novel, as in "Glaubenslos?", Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach seems to say that morality can exist wholly independent of religion, that although belief in God fails, love of the right remains; love of the good is stronger than all else and abides in the face of all kinds of trouble. Marie Dornack has learned the value of truth and right for its own sake. Having lost her right to the truth, she has lost it all. When it would have been easiest to tell the truth, she forced herself to be silent for the sake of others. When it would have been easiest to conceal the truth, she told all, simply because a return to the world of truth was the greatest joy earth could give her. She knew both the good and the evil, and we feel that her testimony as to the happiness a moral life brings is sure: "Gut sein ist Glück, einfach, selbstlos, und gut".

So far we have considered only some of the novels of Ebner-Eschenbach. Let us look for a short time at some of her short stories. "Der Fink" and

"Schattenleben" have been considered as biographical material. "Die Freiherrn von Gemperlein" and "Comtesse Muschi", usually cited as models in the realm of the subtly humorous short story, do not have the ethical significance of the novels or of some of the short stories. Nevertheless, even here the chief characters, which are named in the titles of the stories, find themselves. The two brothers, Friedrich and Ludwig von Gemperlein, carry their continual petty strife over political differences even into their love affairs. Both fall in love with the same woman; but, whereas in the beginning they are bitter enemies over the matter and each tries to win out over the other, gradually a realisation of what defeat would mean to the other comes to them, and each very magnanimously resolves to yield to and even help the other to win. As the story turns out, the woman of their choice is already married; but the brothers have learned to respect each other's beliefs, and peace reigns in the house of Gemperlein. Comtesse Muschi, one of the type of sport-countesses common to Viennese society, in a series of letters to a friend tells of the visit of a suitor in her home and at



the same time reveals her own personality. She rides horses, fences, shoots, and inveigles her friends into taking part in elaborate circuses. She keeps her dogs in the library because no one goes in there. She declares she is "schrecklich bildungs-fähig", but regards Goethe as immoral and Schiller as verbose. The young man who comes to visit, apparently as a suitor for Comtesse Muschi, finds nothing attractive in her. Instead, he enlists her, much to her surprise and disappointment, for she realises she has learned to love him, to aid him in winning a friend of hers, a modest, domestically inclined girl. From a character wholly self-satisfied and uninterested in other people, she begins to realise her own shortcomings and a greater good in others. Her last letter ends with the words: "Es ist nicht immer so angenehm, als man glaubt, eine Sportscomtess zu sein", and the reader feels that her present dissatisfaction is only a step to a higher self.

"Die Spitzin", like "Das Gemeindegkind", is the story of a boy left alone in the world. Unlike Pavel, however, Provi Kirchhof knows nothing of his parents. He has been left by a band of gypsies in a village churchyard and

found by an old woman, who cares for him until her death. After her death Provi wanders about in rags, hated and avoided by everyone. He sleeps at night in a hay-loft, and when he appears in the morning at the door of the house and asks for milk, the house-wife gives it to him. One morning the man of the house demands that Provi say "Please", but Provi refuses and goes without his milk thereafter.

He goes to work in a quarry and sleeps in the road-maker's goat-shed. The road-maker's sons have nothing to fear from association with Provi, for their chief delight is to torture the animals about the place, and Provi has a share in the fun. An old Spitz dog has suffered most at their hands. She has only three legs and one eye. Now she has a puppy, and the two dogs sleep in the stall next to Provi. At night the mother-dog whines and searches for three puppies that Provi had helped to drown. This bothers Provi, and one night in a fit of anger he throws a heavy board over the partition and injures the mother-dog. A few hours later, as day is dawning, she drags the puppy in to Provi, lays it at his feet, and looks up at him. "Und ihr Auge hatte eine Sprache, beredter als jede Sprache, die die schönsten Worte

bilden kann. Sie äusserte ein grenzenloses Vertrauen, eine flehentliche Bitte und man musste sie verstehen. Wie das Sonnenlicht durch die geschlossenen Lider Provis gedrungen war, so drang der Ausdruck dieses Auges durch den Panzer, der bisher jede gute Regung von der Seele des Buben ferngehalten hatte." The dog falls dead, and Provi is suddenly overwhelmed by the mother-love she has shown, a love such as he himself had never known. "Jo du! Jo du!- du bist a Muatta g'west!" he sobs, pressing his face against that of the dead dog. "Sein Herz wollte ihm zerspringen, ein Strom von wildem Leid, von quälender Pein durchtobte es und erschütterte es bis auf den Grund. Ein vom himmlischen Schmerze des Mitleids erfülltes Kind wand sich schluchzend auf den Boden"... The puppy becomes hungry, and Provi, now its only provider, despairs of finding anything for it. Suddenly he remembers the house-wife who gave him milk. But no, he cannot go to her,- she would make him ask for it politely, and that he will not do. Still the puppy cannot starve, and a thought comes to Provi of which he had not dreamed the day before - "verhungern lassen ist noch etwas ganz anderes, als verhungern ". He picks up the puppy, walks to the village,

steps at the door of his former benefactress, and says: "Schoberwirtin, Frau Schoberwirtin, i bitt um a Müalch". The story closes with these words, which may well be applied to every novel or story reviewed: "Das war die Wendung in einem Menschenherzen und in einem Menschen-schicksal". It is only the simple trust of a mother-dog that calls out the good in Provi, but if the belief in the good is present, according to Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach, that is all that is necessary. "Die Spitzin" reminds one of her best-known dog-story, "Krambambuli", but since the dog is the chief figure in the plot, and not an influence on a human character, it will not be necessary to consider it here.

In "Er lasst die Hand küssen" the author gives a picture of moral conditions under the old patriarchal system of land ownership and of bond-service, a remnant of feudalism, that was not wholly abolished until 1781. In the lord or lady of the manor were vested legislative, executive, and judicial powers. The matter of life and death rested in their hands, and if they were inclined to be severe, their subjects suffered. "Er lasst die

"Hand küssen" is the story of the fate of the boy Mischka, who, while his mistress is performing in a pastoral for the amusement of her guests, is flogged to death at her orders. "Der Muff" and "Fräulein Susannen's Weihnachtsabend" have for their themes the joy of giving. The wife of the general in "Der Muff", though she knows it is not moral benevolence to give promiscuously to the poor, cannot resist the joy of seeing their faces light up as they receive her gift. One winter day, as she is on her way home, she gives away all that her purse contains and, finally, even her muff to an old woman. The woman is suspected of having stolen the muff and is imprisoned. The Generalin must admit that there may be better ways of helping the poor than by giving directly to them because it pleases one to do so. "Fräulein Susannen's Weihnachtsabend" is a story of true benevolence. Fräulein Susanne, after years of privation and hard work, is left money enough to be able to give all the gifts at Christmas time that she wishes. "Anderen Vergnügen machen, ist ein Vergnügen für jeden natürlich gearteten Menschen, ..für mich aber, die so spät dazu kam, ein berausches Glück". Year after

year she sends gifts; but to none does it occur that she might like to join in their Christmas celebration or receive a gift herself. As a matter of fact, she is very lonely, and the joy of mere giving begins to wear off. "Die Menschen, denen sie Gutes tut, was ist sie ihnen? Eine unermessliche reiche Person, die einen Teil ihres Überflusses dazu verwendet, sie aus drückender Not zu befreien". Christmas has come again, and this year she includes a tree and gifts for a large family of children, whose parents have little to spend on Christmas presents. Toni, the eldest, a sober-faced, business-like little fellow, appears at Fräulein Susanne's door with three small packages for her. One is a gilded nut, one a red apple, and the third a gingerbread soldier. As he leaves he remarks: "Sie kann alles essen, auch die Nuss, aber schad wär's halt". No one but Toni remembers her with a gift. That he has thought of her sets her to thinking. What a good-hearted, sensible boy Toni is. What a help he would be to his parents and himself if only he could have a good education, "wenn er Bildung bekäme, die echte, die von innen heraus kommt, den Wert des Menschen erhöht und

den Stolz auf seinen Wert verringert". Then Fräulein Susanne resolves that he shall have it. In this case she helps another self to realize itself, and in so doing, she finds herself.

"Die Poesie des Unbewussten" is significant here because in its naive way it illustrates again the truth of the aphorism: "Der Glaube an das Gute ist es, der das Gute lebendig macht". A young wife refuses to believe evil of her husband and finds him true to her faith in him. "Man übe Treue, und sie wird in der Welt sein".

THE SYSTEM OF ETHICS  
DEDUCED FROM HER NOVELS, STORIES,  
AND APHORISMS.

Having considered the ethical themes of some of Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach's novels and short stories, it remains to determine so far as possible what her answers are to the problems of the nature, the authority, the knowledge, of the good, and the relation of the self to the social good,- in other words, to reduce the ethical import of her works to something of a system. Gabrielle<sup>1</sup> Reuter says her whole ethics may be summed up as: "Sei mutig und gerecht, sei treu und wahr", for whoever is courageous and just, faithful and true, is a free man within. Any relation between two individuals, both of whom have these qualities, can never be that of master and servant in the traditional sense,- even though chance has put the task of letting the work into the hands of one and the task of doing it into the hands of the other. Moritz Necker<sup>2</sup>

1. Gabrielle Reuter: Die Dichtung. Vol. XIX p. 49.

2. Moritz Necker: Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach. p. 132.



regards the speech of the school-master in "Die Unverstände-  
ne auf dem Dorfe" as the sum total of her ethics. Max  
<sup>1</sup>  
Lerenz in discussing volumes eight and nine of the Gesammel-  
te Schriften choses the same speech as the expression of  
of the most fundamental ethical conception in her works.  
To be sure, such brief statements serve to give one an  
insight into what her ethics might be, but they can scarce-  
ly contain her ethics as a whole.

It will be remembered that in "Das Gemeinde-  
kind" she calls Wm.M.Salter's book, "Die Religion der Moral",  
"ein Wunderbuch, desgleichen noch nie eines geschrieben wurde",  
and the members of the Society for Ethical Culture "die  
Entzündler und Hüter des heiligsten Feuers, das je auf Erden  
brannte...."; which goes to show that she is in sympathy  
with Mr.Salter's views. Therefore, before going further, it  
will be well to consider what ideas he expresses. Several of  
the novels and short stories reviewed above were written  
before 1885, the date of the appearance of "Die Religion  
der Moral" in Germany, which fact precludes the supposition  
that she got her ethics entirely from his book. No doubt  
she thought so highly of his book, when it appeared, because

1.Preussische Jahrbücher. 1902 Vol.108 p.164.

her own views were in sympathy with those it expressed. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that "Glaubensleser?", "Das Gemeindeglied", and "Unsühnbar", the three novels that most strongly maintain the independence of morality from religion, were all written after 1885.

Mr. Salter would substitute for existing religions a religion of ethics. He says: "I wish to show that religion, the only true religion - though it nowhere exists now - is but the blossoming out of morality; that morality is its root, instead of being a branch from the root of religion". To him the moral nature is "that by which we transcend ourselves and enter into an ideal region". "Ethics", he says, "is essentially what ought to be". The good and the right are simply what should be. Under his discussion of the question "Is there a higher law?" according to which we say this act is right and that wrong, he admits he cannot define this law, but is content to call it "that which commands us to seek the universal good", - in other words, "God or the reason and nature of things". This command to seek the higher good is heard by every human being, it is given to him by his very nature as a moral being. There is nothing higher than to

perform a moral action,- "the dignity of man lies in his capacity for such action". The higher rule, he says, applies everywhere. "Treat each man with whom you are in contact as having the ends of a man, and as far as in you lies, help him to realise these ends". In Chapter V he discusses the matter of laws, and principles in morals. Principles only are absolute in morality, according to his discussion, but in case of a conflict between two duties, he suggests this rule: "Ask yourself whether you are doubting what to do because you secretly desire to do a particular thing, or because a really higher duty seems to command you". This rule reminds one of Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach's aphorism: "Wenn Du sicher wählen willst in Conflict zweier Pflichten, wähle diejenige, die zu erfüllen Dir schwerer fällt".

That which makes an individual, a people, or nation strong, according to Mr. Salter, is its choice of the good or higher things. Selfishness disintegrates, love builds up and binds together. In Chapter VII he discusses under the "Social Ideal" the relation of the individual to society; his view is essentially that of other ethical writers,- namely, that every individual is an end, a self

to be realized. "I feel that if I do not honor another I do not honor myself, for I fundamentally am every other: it is one common nature, wherein we all share. I am lifted with every honor and cast down with every shame, that comes to another child of man...For we are in a truth bound to one another,- we belong to humanity. It is against our nature to seek a good for ourselves, alone and apart; it is according to our nature to find our happiness in the common happiness,- to give, to spend and be spent in the service of humanity". After a chapter on "The Rights of Labor", he shows why present-day religions have failed, and that a religion of ethics is abiding because it is based on human nature.

Whether Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach would make ethics a religion, need not be discussed here; but in several ways her ethics, as reflected in her works, are identical with those expressed by Mr. Salter. She believes implicitly, as does he, in the moral impulse in everyone and in the power of everyone to attain the good if they will. She emphatically declares that to bring the good to being in others it is necessary to believe in it. The

extreme love of humanity and admiration for the good and the altruism expressed in such chapters as those on "Rights of Labor" and the "Social Ideal" are quite characteristic of Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach. But the most fundamental and significant conception that she seems to have got from "Die Religion der Moral" is that of the independence of morality from religion, the sovereignty of the ethical. The very universality of the moral impulse seems to her, as well as to Mr. Salter, a rock on which to build. Nothing to her is more ultimate than the law of right. We choose the right, not to please God, but for its own sake. It is in our very nature to do so; thereby we satisfy our desires to express our nobler selves. With this fundamental conception of her belief in the all-sufficiency, in the sovereignty of the good, let us turn to the four final problems. In the determination of each one, the plan will be to consider, first, the novels and stories reviewed, then the aphorisms, and finally to formulate the conclusion.

As was shown above, the idea of self-realisation seems to be the central ethical theme. Pavel Holub, Marie Dornach, Letti, Paul Sennberg, Leo Klinger, Dr, Resen-

zweig, the Sendbete, Marie Walter, the Barents of Gemperlein, Comtesse Muschi, Provi Kirchhof, and the rest, all pass through the process of self-realisation. Sometimes this moral development is expressly stated, as in the closing sentence of "Die Spitzin": "Das war die Wendung in einem Menschenherzen und in einem Menschenschicksal"; sometimes the reader must find it for himself in the sequence of events or in what the chief character says, in his attitude toward the new values that he has found. But whatever method Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach uses, the fact of continual growth in character toward the good remains as her idea of the nature of the good.

The question naturally arises: Although self-realisation seems to be her general theme, are we justified in assuming that that to her is the true good? In past ages all sorts of ends have been deemed the good. Pleasure, fame, self-denial, wealth, happiness have been, and are still, regarded by many as the best end in life. How may we be sure that one of these, and not self-realisation, is the good to her? A glance at the novels again will answer this question. Not once is she content to portray a character who has

changed from a state of misery to one of comfort, from sorrow to joy, from obscurity to fame, from selfishness to self-denial, from poverty to wealth, and then to leave him there. These assets may all have their values in life, but they are by no means the supreme good. They may be well and good as supplementary to the true good, but never as ends in themselves. The characters she portrays are those that have aspirations toward a higher, more ideal, more social self, and who then attain to those aspirations. This attainment may bring with it happiness or fame or wealth and comfort, as when she says: "Gutsein ist Glück", or in other words, the moral life brings happiness; but these are good only because they have come through the realisation of new moral values. She never makes happiness an end in itself, although she invariably shows that he who has found himself is happy. The character who has found himself values that fact more highly than all the other goods that may come to him. To him the moral life is the highest, the greatest good in itself. Marie Dernach, having committed an immoral act, realises immediately the value of a moral life, and though she feels she can never atone for her wrong, in her

new realisation of moral integrity as the greatest good in the world, she rises far above her old self. When Pavel Holub has learned the value of the moral life, nothing else matters. He is ready to face anything the world may have to offer, but one thing he clings to,- his moral integrity. Such an illustration can be found in the other stories as well. Evidently self-realisation is to her the supreme good.

It must be remembered that self-realisation, like happiness, is not something that can be found with much seeking. Those who would make it an end will fail in their purpose. He who would spend his time and energy in molding his own character will never know self-realisation. Like happiness it comes as a consequence. Self-realisation is self-forgetting in the good of others. Leo Klinger finds himself in the knowledge of the service he can render the community. Pavel Holub has before him the ideal of some day becoming burgher-master and repaying all the evil he has suffered with good. But this leads to the discussion of the relation of the self to the good, which will be taken up later.

The best succinct statement of Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach's idea of the nature of the good to be found in



her novels is undoubtedly that of the schoolmaster in the story "Die Unverständene auf dem Dorfe": "Es gibt eine Entwicklung des Menschen, einen Fortschritt im Guten, und seine gefährlichsten Feinde sind die , die ihn leugnen."

A few of the aphorisms denote in a general way the nature of the good: "Die Güte, die nicht grenzenlos ist, verdient den Namen nicht"; "Der Geist ist ein intermittierender, die Güte ein permanenter Quell"; "Die Grossen schaffen das Grosse, die Guten das Dauernde"; "Nur was für die Gegenwart zu gut ist, ist gut genug für die Zukunft"; "Was noch zu leisten ist, das bedenke; was Du schon geleistet hast, das vergiss". In the parable "Die Siegerin" she describes a great battle of the vices and virtues. "Es wurde Abend und Nacht; der Streit blieb unentschieden, die Streiter lagen erschöpft. Die Güte allein wandelte über die Wahlstatt, munter wie ein sprudelnder Quell, lieblich wie das Morgenrot, und labte die Leidenden, und in dem Augenblick liessen sogar ihre Feinde es gelten: Die Stärkste bist Du!" Here the general characteristics of boundlessness, permanence, expansion, continual growth in service for others are assigned to goodness.

In conclusion we may say that to Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach the good is self-realisation, or the reflective choice by the individual of the higher socialised powers, whereby he attains completeness of life.

When the problem of the nature of the good has been answered, the other three problems are to a certain degree already solved. If the good is the reflective choice of the higher self, then reflection must be a means to the knowledge of the good. According to modern ethical writers, we know what is good through deliberation, or the mental review of several conflicting courses of action, until intuition, or a sense of the greater worth of one of these courses of action, determines our final choice. That such a technical answer to the problem as this would be quite out of the question in any form of literature, goes without saying, but here it is our interest and aim to observe whether Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach has her characters pass through some such process before they know what is good for them to do, and also what more general ideas she expresses in the aphorisms. Let us take, for example, the case of Pavel Holub. As he leaves the convent after his first visit to

Milada, he rehearses in his mind all that Milada has said and done. How good she is! And who would have thought she loved him so much, - him who is only a wicked thief and vagabond? She wishes him to become good and believes he will. But why should he change his ways, when everyone calls him a thief and does everything in their power to make him one? Could he change if he wanted to? Then he thinks of Milada again, and he resolves to be worthy of her love and confidence. He intuitively knows he has made the right choice, for instead of dissatisfaction and loss of self-respect, a sense of joy, pride, and self-reliance fills him, which he could not describe if he would. Of one thing, however, he is convinced, - namely, "dass er einer grossen Veränderung seines Schicksals entgegen gehe, dem geheimnissvollen Anfang zu einem schöneren, besseren Leben". Likewise, Letti Fessler spends the night thinking over Halwig's plight and weighing, as in a balance, her love for the clock-collection and its inestimable value to her father against her conviction of the necessity of saving a human soul. Fräulein Susanne chases to educate Toni only after she has convinced herself of his worth and of the uselessness of giving to

these who cannot appreciate it. Provi Kirchhof comes to the conclusion after much hard thought, which necessitates his casting off former firm convictions, that it is something quite different to let starve than to starve. Dr. Resenzweig, on hearing the speech of the Sendbete, compares the aims of his past life with the ideals preached and practised by the Sendbete. He cannot help being ashamed of the great contrast, but he rejoices in his shame, for it is to him "als ein Wahrzeichen seiner Wandlung, der Beginn seines inneren Wachsens und Klärens". The change in each case is wholly subjective, and Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach is psychologist enough to know that reflection must precede it. Anyone with any knowledge of human nature would expect it. What the author has done, then, rather than offering us in her novels a theory of how we know the good, is to give us one more indication of her knowledge of human nature. The fact remains, however, that her knowledge of human nature corresponds to the scientific analysis of it in this particular instance.

It is interesting to note, also, that in every instance that one of her characters finds himself, his feel-

ings play a large part in his final choice of the higher good. Pavel's love for Milada and his desire to please her helps to determine his choice. Letti's sympathy for Halwig overrules her extreme reverence for the collection of clocks. Provi is touched to the quick by the devotion of the mother-dog.

A few of the aphorisms are valuable here. One of them says: "Wie weise muss man sein, um immer gut zu sein!" which reminds one of Socrates' "Ignorance is vice" and of the Greek conception of wisdom as the good. This would seem to say that the wise or learned man could be immoral, but that the untutored man must necessarily be immoral. Such was not the interpretation by the Greeks of the term wisdom or knowledge. To them it meant a "realising sense, an intimate and well-founded conviction", as today we use the term conscientiousness. Today we class it with the virtues and mean by it an "intelligent concern for the good". An intelligent concern for the good will lead one to a knowledge of the good, but explains nothing as to the knowledge of the good. In another aphorism Marie von Ebner says: "Sei Deines Willens Herr und Deines Gewissens Knecht", which leads one to ask: what does she mean by conscience?

1. Dewey and Tufts: Ethics. pp. 418-9.

A few more aphorisms help to determine this: "Fähigkeit ruhiger Erwägung -: Anfang aller Weisheit; Quell aller Güte! " ; Überlege ein Mal, bevor Du gibst, zwei Mal, bevor Du annimmst, and tausendmal, bevor Du verlangst"; "Das Vernünftige ist durchaus nicht immer das Gute, das Vernünftigste jedoch muss auch das Beste sein".

From this evidence it would seem that Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach regards reason or reflection, influenced by the feelings, as the means of knowing the good. Not only the good or the wise man alone discovers the good through reflection,- everyone has the impulse toward the good, so that when he must choose between conflicting ends, his choice of the higher, more altruistic good brings satisfaction, and the rejection of the higher good for the selfish narrow good gives a "warning sense of moral loss". Accordingly, when such characters as Pavel or Dr. Rosenzweig or Paul Seznberg can and do feel the impulse toward the good as seen as they reflectively balance the greater good against the lesser.

Our next question is: why do Marie von Ebner's characters decide for the higher good, the new self, and

reject the old, habitual, less social self? What authority do they feel in the higher good that impels them, after deliberation, to choose it? That the author does not believe in the efficacy of moral rules is evident from one of her aphorisms: "Es stände besser um die Welt, wenn die Mühe, die man sich gibt, die subtilsten Moralgesetze auszuklügeln, zur Ausübung der einfachsten angewendet würde". That religious scruples determine the choice of the characters is not evident in any one of her stories. For example, although Milada and the atmosphere that surrounds her in the convent are deeply religious, Pavel is not touched by that element at all. In fact, his feelings toward the nuns and the baroness, who are keeping Milada in the convent, would destroy any sympathy in him for the church and its teachings. As he walks home from his visit, it is not on Milada's religious ideal, - namely, that of atoning by her saintly life for the sins of her parents and thus of assuring them a peaceful eternity, - that he meditates, but on her kindness, her unselfishness, her love and trust in him. Likewise, in "Glaubensles?" Leo Klinger chooses to remain in Schran, though contrary to his desires, not because of his

religious convictions or his love of the church, but because of his desire to serve humanity, to make pure so far as possible "one of the countless sources from which good and evil flow out into the world". Marie Dernach confesses her sin to a priest of the church, but still finds no peace. Forgiveness by the church cannot free her from her guilt. She must confess to all the world and suffer the consequences, because ever her, immutable, stands the categorical imperative of the true and the good, than to obey which she can conceive no greater joy. The ideals that impel Dr. Rosenzweig, Letti, Paul Sennberg, Marie Walter, Fräulein Susanne and the rest toward the greater good are purely ethical and not religious. If this statement could be questioned as to any one of the characters, it would be as to Dr. Rosenzweig. The Sendbete's speech is at times religious in tone, but his whole plea is one for humanity rather than an appeal to humanity to turn to God.

Marie von Ebner seems to express two contrasting ideas as to the authority of the good. The one is that of duty as a categorical imperative, and the other that of duty as an ideal to be realised, - duty as something that is



asserted and illustrated is that it is faith in the good that makes it live. Pavel knows that Milada expects much of him, the trust expressed in the eyes of the Spitz dog stirs Provi Kirchhof to action, Leo Klinger puts his trust in the most sordid of the villagers of Schran, and is not disappointed. The haughtiness of Marie Walter is destroyed by the interest and faith in her, first of the priest, then of the school-master. Letti's faith in and sacrifice for Hermann Halwig fails, apparently because she never lets him know of it. But what is the knowledge of this faith in us but the realization of a standard or ideal set up for us according to which we shall be measured? If this faith in us credits us with greater virtue than we really possess, we catch a glimpse of a self to which we can attain if only we will. No doubt our feelings toward the person who has faith in us influences us to no small degree.

In summing up we find that Marie von Ebner speaks sometimes of duty as if it were outside the individual, something to be obeyed and not questioned, at other times as if it were the individual's sense of what should be.

As one would expect from a writer with a strong love for humanity and a keen conviction of the innate existence of the moral impulse in the individual, the second idea prevails in her works.

Wm. M. Salter in "Ethical Religion" in his chapter on the "Social Ideal" says: "It is sometimes said that all morality involves social relations. There can be no question that a large part of it does.... But though our life is properly in society it is possible for us to live apart and according to our own individual caprice, if we will. Such individualism is the primal sin... Some sense of the claims of every human being, though he be of the lowest and the worst, and that will not allow us to trample upon him, though he be fairly in the dust at our feet; some feeling of indescribable awe, even though it be blended with pity, when any human form passes before our eye, - this is the measure and the test, yes, the very significance of morality... The principle of the social ideal is that every man shall be an end as well as a means". A similar idea is expressed by Jane Addams:<sup>1</sup> "(We) forget that it is necessary to know of the lives of our contemporaries, not only in order to believe

1. Jane Addams: Democracy and Social Ethics. p.176.

in their integrity, which is after all but the first beginnings of social morality, but in order to attain to any mental or moral integrity for ourselves or any such hope for society". John Dewey concisely states the same truth when he says: "Moral quality resides in the habitual dispositions of an agent; and...consists of the tendency of these dispositions to secure (or hinder) values which are sociably shared or sharable". Under the discussion of self-realisation as the good, the fact was mentioned that the self is realised as a result of moral action and is not realised when made a conscious end in itself. In other words, the self grows morally in so far as it regards itself as one of the many selves with which it comes in contact, to each of which the opportunity of self-realisation is due. Self-forgetting in an objective end that furthers the good of the "kingdom of selves" means self-realisation.

This paradox Marie von Ebner expresses explicitly in one of her aphorisms: "Bis zu einem gewissen Grade selbstlos sollte man schon aus Selbstsucht sein". Does she also express this truth through her characters in her novels and stories? From all that has gone before, it is

evident that she does. Dr. Resenzweig is no longer satisfied with a mere exchange of his professional knowledge for money; he finds lasting satisfaction in untiring service for any who may need him. As his old coachman describes him: "Er macht die Kranken gesund, macht die Halbtoten lebendig...Er sagt nur:-Wart! - und der Tod wartet...Eine Frau hat er nicht, aber mehr als hundert Kinder". Lee Klinger, Letti, Paul Sennberg, Marie and the school-master, Provi, Fräulein Susanne, all, in varying degrees, forget self for the good of others and so rise above self. Even Pavel plans for the comfort of his mother when she comes home and dreams of the day when he, as burgo-master, shall repay evil with good. Halwig is an example of one, who does not look beyond his own selfish ends. Because his books bring money, the effect of the base in them on the readers is nothing to him. The town-council that sends Pavel to live with the unscrupulous herdsman's family overlooks the fact that their own good and that of their children's children is thereby endangered. The countess who, with supreme indifference, has Mischka flogged to death, does not foresee the beginning of the end of such power.

There are many aphorisms with the strong social note that is so manifest in her stories. Some of them are: "Erinnere Dich der Vergessenen - eine Welt geht Dir auf"; "In der Jugend meinen wir, das Geringste, das die Menschen uns gewähren können, sei Gerechtigkeit. Im Alter erfahren wir, dass es das Höchste ist"; "Das unfehlbare Mittel, Autorität über die Menschen zu gewinnen ist, sich ihnen nützlich zu machen"; "Wenn wir das Unrecht hassen und nicht Diejenigen, die es tun, werden wir unsere Kampfgenossen und unsere Feinde lieben"; "Je mehr Du Dich selbst liebst, je mehr bist Du Dein eigener Feind"; "Man kann nicht allen helfen! sagt der Engherzige und - hilft Keinem"; "Arme Leute schenken gern"; "Wenn man nicht aufhören will, die Menschen zu lieben, muss man nicht aufhören, ihnen Gutes zu tun"; "Kein Mensch steht so hoch, dass er anderen gegenüber nur gerecht sein dürfte"; "Liebe alle Menschen, der Leidende aber sei Dein Kind"; "Nicht jeder grosse Mann ist ein grosser Mensch"; "Nächstenliebe lebt mit tausend Seelen, Egoismus mit einer einzigen, und die ist erbärmlich"; "Nichts bist Du, nichts ohne die Anderen. Der verbissenste Misanthrop braucht die Menschen doch, wenn auch nur, um sie zu verachten"; "Wenn Jeder dem

Anderen helfen wollte, wäre Allen geholfen".

To Marie von Ebner self-realisation is the self-forgetting in the good of others, not because it is immoral to consider oneself, but because others should the same consideration as we give ourselves.

CONCLUSION.

Anyone who comes in contact with the real personality of Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach is convinced of her sincere love of and faith in humanity. To her human nature, with all its possibilities and its weaknesses, is the most fascinating study in the world. A knowledge of that fact alone explains her vital interest in the ethical, since, as we have seen, the moral is rooted in human nature. But even the realisation of this fact does not give us the appreciation of her "ethical wisdom" which a study of the principles back of it affords. Just as a knowledge of anatomy means a finer appreciation of the sculptor's art, a knowledge of some of the fundamental traits of human nature increases our admiration for the art of the novelist who really understands human nature. For this reason I have endeavored to determine what to Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach constitutes the good, how one acquires the knowledge of the good, what authority it has over her characters, and the

relation of these charactersto the good of others. Fully realising that to each problem alone a thesis might be devoted, I have arrived at these general conclusions: self-realisation, in the sense of growth in character to a more complete self, is the good; knowledge of the good comes through reflection and a sympathetic, altruistic attitude of mind; it has authority over man through his sense of duty, - duty as an ideal held up to him, especially by others who have faith in him, or by himself, of what he ought to be; self-realisation comes through objective ends that are for the good of all.

That these conclusions coincide with those of modern ethical writers is apparent. Why should this be so? Simply because the science of moral conduct is based on the analysis of human nature, and Marie von Ebner's ethics are based on a keen insight into and faith in human nature. Would a narrower, less elastic, less human moral philosophy be consistent with an intense love of humanity? Thus Marie von Ebner's ethical philosophy, as developed in her works and as based, not so much on a study of moral philosophies, as on a thorough knowledge of human nature, sets a stamp of



approval on the modern science, and the modern science bears witness to the soundness of her knowledge.

The most fundamental ethical truth for which Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach, like Wm. M. Salter, stands is that the moral impulse is in every normal human being and that this impulse may be wholly independent of religious dogma. This belief to her invests man with a new dignity. It places her in the very forefront of modern thought, and, as a result, she delineates such characters as Leo Klinger, Letti die Uhrmacherin, Dr. Resenzweig and the Sendbote, which would have been inconceivable before the last few decades. "He that loseth his life shall find it" Christ said in the Sermon on the Mount, but men are just beginning now to realize the full significance of the truth and to apply it to their own lives. That it is natural for man to lose himself is a distinctly modern conception, diametrically opposed to the imperialism of the past. That humanity is worthy of all the individual has to give, and that the individual can have no loftier ambition is what Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach tells us through the characters she portrays.

Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach is an idealist  
and a realist, an individualist and a socialist, an  
optimist, not a pessimist, a moralist and at the same time  
a great artist.

NOVELS AND STORIES BY MARIE VON EBNER-ESCHENBACH  
READ FOR THIS THESIS.

Das Gemeindegind.

Der Kreisphysikus.

Glaubenslos?

Letti, die Uhrmacherin.

Nach dem Tode.

Die Unverstandene auf dem Dorfe.

Unsühnbar.

Die Freiherrn von Gemperlein.

Comtesse Muschi.

Die Spitzin.

Die Resel.

Er lässt die Hand küssen.

Der Muff.

Die Poesie der Unbewussten.

Fräulein Susannen's Weihnachtsabend.

Der Fink.

Schattenleben.

Krambambuli.

Parabeln,  
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Meine Kinderjahre.

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