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Marie von Ebner Eschenbach's Ohne Liebe: A Translation and Commentary

Steven L. Peris

A thesis submitted to the faculty of  
Brigham Young University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts

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## ABSTRACT

Marie von Ebner Eschenbach's *Ohne Liebe*: A Translation and Commentary

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Master of Arts

This thesis explores a short drama of Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach, *Without Love*. It provides not only a complete English translation of the work, but also an interpretative introduction. By first examining the life of Ebner-Eschenbach, I am able to provide insight to the origins of the play. Because Ebner-Eschenbach faced so much opposition in her drama writing career this one act play becomes more relevant. It contains similar themes to her other works such as: gender roles, the role of the aristocracy, and love in marriage. *Without Love* examines the role of love in marriage by providing the reader with a comedic scenario in which a couple claims to marry without love. While purporting a marriage without love, there is in fact a great deal of love in the play. Love is an enabling power in the story that causes great change in the characters' lives. Ebner-Eschenbach uses love to argue against traditional romantic marriages and lay the pathway for a future where women can reject the patriarchal society and love for themselves. There is however, a distinct irony in the story because the title is after all, *Without Love*. I propose that love is indeed everywhere throughout the play and that Eschenbach uses this theme to push her own agenda of the modern women in aristocratic societies. Eschenbach writes in both a pre-modern and modern style and uses love to ensure the preservation of her own aristocratic class while advocating for social reform for all classes.

Keywords: Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach, *Ohne Liebe*, Female Austrian and German Authors of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries.

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## Why Ohne Liebe? 1.1 Introduction

Nearly a decade after writing *Ohne Liebe*, Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach noted in her diary that having the play performed in her home city of Vienna was “her wish fulfilled” (Henn 763). Although forgotten today, the one act drama about the Countess Lasswitz and her attempts to marry off her granddaughter Emma was performed regularly for almost a decade and received many positive reviews. Despite its popularity at the time, it has not yet been translated into English. While many of Eschenbach’s works have been noted as of high value and translated into many languages, the majority of her works remain unknown to many readers. The translation of *Ohne Liebe* is needed because it creates a sense of continuity in Eschenbach’s literature. The play discusses love and the role it plays in the aristocratic society in which the author lived. Eschenbach would continue to write about the roles of love in many of her works and this drama shows that she wrote with the intentions of addressing changing social norms both early on and later in her works. By providing an accurate translation of the original play and an interpretation, I hope to make this work available to more readers and create a better conception of Eschenbach’s importance as an author and social reformer.

## 1.2 Biographical Background

Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach was born Marie von Dubsky von Trebomyslic in 1830 and raised in the Kromeriz region of Moravia, then part of the Austrian Empire. This early environment would later play a role in many of her writings. Early in life, Marie faced tragedy with the loss of her mother, Marie Vockel, which left the Count Dubsky to care for two young girls. Though he would later marry, the Count held his deceased wife in the highest regard. He taught his children about her and made sure they understood that she loved them. Marie often thought about her deceased mother and mentions in her autobiography *Meine Kinderjahre*, how she was ever present in her thoughts

We had been given to understand that she would keep watch over us from heaven and that she would be with us in hours of sickness or danger. I will never forget with what confidence and what mysterious bliss the awareness of her presence often filled me (750).

Count Dubsky eventually married four times due to the deaths of his spouses, but Marie felt that her father was never truly as happy as he was with her own birth mother. She claimed that her mother “lovingly and caringly protected all that was good and noble in him. She pushed the deficiencies of his character back into the shadows and tried to smooth out his rough angles. The years when she was at his side were the crown of his life and he always kept her memory sacred” (Meine 770). Clearly Count

Dubsky spoke often of his wife and we can see that her influence was never truly gone even though she passed away early in Marie's childhood.

I mention these details about Eschenbach's relationship with her mother because women's roles play a strong role in many of Eschenbach's works, including *Ohne Liebe* and to show that Eschenbach was never left without women in her life. From early on, Eschenbach thought about the roles of women because her father instilled in her a love for her mother and the role of women in the home (Bramkamp 3). According to Eschenbach's father, Marie's mother was the epitome of motherhood. She was the type of women who loved unconditionally and was happy in her domestic situation. This is however, not the type of women we see in many of Eschenbach's stories. Marie admired women who asserted themselves and voiced their opinions and were committed to the women's cause (Klostermeyer 198). She wrote about women who were more realistic and rational, rather than those who lived in a loving family situation. Perhaps the way Eschenbach's mother was portrayed in her life created a tension about the role of women in the home and society for her and this is why so many of her works focus on women's roles. While Eschenbach's egalitarian motive of love could explain how often we see women in her works, I believe there is more than just this reasoning. Eschenbach lived a life fairly void of a mother's love, but could not let go of her own mother and this could be a reason for so many of her works revolving around the role of love. More on the role of love in Eschenbach's life will be discussed



later in the paper, but despite losing her mother at an early age, Marie was not left without women in her life. Marie had a variety of maternal influences early in her life including governesses, step mothers, and her biological grandmother Baroness Vockel, who lived with the family for a time.

Perhaps the constant changing of the maternal guard made it easier for Marie to take up writing, despite its cultural unacceptability for a woman. She showed a fondness for writing and reading at an early age and wrote poems often. Aside from her cousin (and later husband) Moritz von Ebner-Eschenbach many family members found her interest in writing to be wasteful. At the age of seventeen, Marie's second step-mother, Countess Xaverine, desired the opinion of an accomplished writer to decide whether or not the young aspiring author had true talent, or should stop her foolish ambitions and pursue activities more becoming of a young noble. Marie's writings were sent to the revered Austrian writer Franz Grillparzer with the hopes that his criticism would stop young Marie from wanting to write (Steiner 22).<sup>1</sup> Much to the dismay of the family, Grillparzer was impressed with the writings and traveled to the Dubsky's home in order to discuss his impressions with the family and young author. Finding no one at home, the author penned his comments:

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<sup>1</sup> Diethe (129) reports that Xaverine meant to encourage Marie by writing to Grillparzer, but all other sources indicate that Xaverine's attempts were to discourage Marie from writing.

The poems show unmistakable traces of talent. A most fortunate ear for verse, the power of expression, a perhaps overly profound sentiment, insight, and a keen gift for judgment in many of her satirical poems form a talent which elicits interest. The neglect of its cultivation might hardly be in the power of its owner. What is still lacking is that maturity which transforms a poet into an artist, that pervasive lucidity which transfers the thought unimpeded on to the listener (or perhaps even the reader?) (Steiner 22).

These words were not what the family had hoped for and served as a source of strength and as a catalyst for the young author. The words of Grillparzer, with whom Marie would later develop a close friendship, acted as a catalyst and made it evident to Marie that she did indeed have something to say. The disapproval of her family would eventually fade and Marie's determination to write could not be stifled.

In 1848 at the age of eighteen, Marie married the Austrian Captain, engineer, Field-Marshal, and later professor, Moritz von Ebner-Eschenbach. The couple first lived on the family estate in Moravia and spent the winters in the city, but later moved to Vienna. The marriage remained childless but was happy nonetheless. Having a husband to confide in and collaborate with proved of great benefit to the aspiring author. Moritz was supportive of his wife's endeavors as an author and would continue to lend his support. The Eschenbach family associated with a group of aristocrats who called for moderate reform in government, the church, and the military, and like their

associates shared an ambition for reform. While differing on various issues, Marie and Moritz were united in their desire for change within the empire and, though she held no political office, Marie strived to better the social structures of their day through her writings.

Eschenbach's works gained popularity as they faced social issues. Her desire to portray life realistically can be seen in her first published drama *Marie Stuart in Schottland* (1860), which addresses the ideas of the French revolution. The work received little acclaim and was virtually unknown at the time. Eschenbach continued to write drama with little success. *Marie Roland* (1860) was not well received, but her next two dramas, *Doktor Ritter* (1869) and *Die Veilchen* (1878), were more popular. In 1890, the Freie Bühne performed the one act comedy, *Ohne Liebe*. In 1897 another comedy, *Am Ende* was performed there. These plays both dealt with troubles faced by Austrian aristocracy and the difficulties of marriage in general.

After numerous attempts at drama, Eschenbach began to write more fiction. In the 1870s she published numerous collected works and stories. *Erzählungen* (1875) included four short stories and was followed by numerous novels including the well-known works *Die Freiherren von Gemperlein* (1879), *Amphroismen* (1880), and *Lotti, die Uhrmacherin* (1880). One of her most substantial works was *Dorf- und Schloßgeschichten* (1883), which made evident her broad social vision. The stories were directed at both her own upper class and the peasant class which she observed. Arguably her most

famous novel, *Das Gemeindegeld* appeared in 1887 and again addressed many social issues, including the rearing of orphaned children, the rehabilitation of criminals, and the ability of a community to forgive and trust one another. Her novels gave a realistic portrayal of the class discrimination, gender roles, and complications of love that members of both the upper and lower classes faced on a daily basis.

Despite certain setbacks throughout her life, Eschenbach was able to find a place in the literary world. We see evidence of this fact through many awards. In 1898 she was awarded the highest honor that any artist could receive in Austria, the Ehrenkreuz für Kunst und Literatur. In 1900 at the age of seventy, Freifrau Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach was awarded an honorary doctoral degree in philosophy from the University of Vienna. She was the first woman to receive such a degree and was revered by the university for her accomplishments (Woodford 91). She died in 1916 in Vienna as a respected member of German speaking literary circles.

Eschenbach often drew inspiration for her stories from her youth and cultural heritage within the Hapsburg Empire. Many of her early works were set in the Moravian countryside, where she was brought up and she often wrote using memories and circumstances of her youth to provide sharp insight into the relationships of the upper and lower classes. One such example is *Das Gemeindegeld*, which is set in a small town run by the local baron. The young orphan Pavel comes in contact with the local Countess and must learn to abide by her regulations. This is similar to Eschenbach's

upbringing. She was raised in the Czech countryside and descended from Saxon and Czech ancestors. With Czech and French as her first languages, Eschenbach fits well into the multi-nationality of her native Hapsburg Empire, which included Czechs, Italians, Hungarians, Serbs, Croats, Poles, and many others. Due to the variety of cultures, the empire struggled to alleviate the plight of many of the lower peasant class and uprisings continued throughout the land (Lloyd 23). Despite the many conflicts between the classes and government, the many widespread social and political reforms lead to revolutionary ideas in both politics and the arts. The Austrian Empire under newly crowned Emperor Franz Joseph was, as Steiner describes, “a fountain of progress” (Steiner 10). Joseph would rule for decades and be forced to reform women’s rights and roles in ways that helped secure Eschenbach’s place in Austrian society.

Though Eschenbach, as a member of the social elite, wrote about reform, her intent was never to harm the empire in any form. She wished to inspire progress. As Lloyd explains, Eschenbach was clearly aware of the actual events that transpired and wrote about the necessity of reform:

Marie von Ebner-E., who herself was a member of this privileged class, saw with her own eyes [its] social evils, and it is natural and understandable that this subject is so often raised in her works. At every opportunity she takes issue with the conditions surrounding her; she is unsparing and relentless toward the aristocratic complacency, indifference, and snobbery (34).

Eschenbach was not the type to sit idly by and watch things happen. In many of her works she critiqued her society's treatment of the lower and used her stories to advocate change. For instance, in the story *Jacom Szele* from *Dorf- und Schlossgeschichten* (1883), she critiques the oppressive nobles, peasant life and the revolt of 1846 in nearby Galicia. Often her works conclude that the noble class was to blame for much of the suffering and poverty that faced the peasants and working class. Class distinction and struggle would remain a key topic in many works of Eschenbach including *Ohne Liebe*.

### 2.1 Ohne Liebe

While *Ohne Liebe* is hardly known today, it has been published numerous times and was performed for nearly ten years after its opening in 1890 (Henn 476). It was first published in 1888 as a dialogical novella in *Westermanns Illustrierte Deutsche Monatshefte*. Eschenbach had recently faced much disappointment and rejection with many of her dramas and it is believed that she published this work first as a novella in order to avoid further rejection (Henn 700). The type of rejection she was accustomed to can be seen in a review of her play *Doktor Ritter* published in a feuilleton in *Die Presse* by Ludwig Speidel. He calls Eschenbach Schiller in his critique because Schiller used the name Doktor Ritter as a pseudonym in order to keep anonymity in his writings. (Thomas 64). It was not overly popular and with the lack of success, may have driven Eschenbach to write more novellas rather than plays. Speidel was skeptical of Eschenbach's abilities and addressed her as "Frau Baronin Ebner, auf literarischem

Felde unter dem Kriegsnamen Eschenbach bekannt" (Bramkamp 29). This was spiteful and sarcastic; calling Marie by her "military name" was interpreted as a discredit to her husband Moritz, who was a well-known military figure (Bramkamp 29). His review reads:

Sie hat wohl daran getan, sich hinter den wirksamen Namen Schiller zu verstecken, denn auf eigene Hand dürfte sie schwerlich wirken können. Was einzig und allein wirkt ist die wohltönende Phrase (feinstes Panama-Stroh), die in Schillers Mund gelegt wird. Und die Moral der Geschichte! Keine andere, als dass Friederich der Große zu dem fragenden Schuster, der sich seiner Bekanntschaft rühmte, freundlich sagte: Du Schafskopp, ich geh in den Siebenjährigen Krieg (Bettelheim 131)

The satirical nature of this quote emphasizes the point that many of Marie's plays were often seen as a "political liability" for the family and for her husband's career (Bramkamp 30). Speidel capitalized on this fact in his review, and his review offers a more aggressive critique than many of the *Ohne Liebe* reviews. It allows us to glimpse at the type of response to which Marie was more accustomed.

Despite the success of *Ohne Liebe*, Eschenbach faced overarching disappointment with her works in many of her personal circles (Bramkamp 29). She has been criticized despite being accepted by the general public and being fairly successful. It was almost a disservice to her credibility that she was an author and not just an opinionated member

of the upper class. Her husband also received criticism due to his wife's occupation. Moritz was faced with ridicule and disgrace and eventually asked Marie to stop writing (Bramkamp 32). Despite this most hurtful attack, Eschenbach continued her literary pursuits and was seemed to accept criticism and distain as a regular part of being an author.

Because of the poor public and private reception of her dramatic work, *Ohne Liebe* was written first as a novella. It is not divided into acts or scenes and does not include a *dramatis personae*. Rather, it begins with a much longer and fuller description of the setting of the story, and also includes an interjection in the middle of the story to again describe the setting and the scene for the reader. This mid-plot break is not included in the staged version. The novella contains what are essentially stage notes to suggest the tone and demeanor of the characters, and many of these notes were included in the stage version.

The stage version was born when Ebner-Eschenbach received a telegram from the director of the Berliner Residenz-Theater on December 3, 1890. It informed Eschenbach that her novella *Ohne Liebe* had been accepted and was to be performed at the theater (Henn 764), even though she never submitted it. She later wrote about the incidence in her journal: "Sie acceptiren *Ohne Liebe*. Das ich ihnen gar nicht angetragen habe" (Henn 763). It is assumed from a letter that the stage critic Paul Schlenther and Otto Bram together played an intermediary role in bringing *Ohne Liebe* to the stage



(Henn 763). Eschenbach expresses just how surprised she was to find out that others had submitted her work to the Freie Bühne:

Es liegt mir sehr am Herzen, Ihnen mitzutheilen, daß die Zeitungen lügen wenn sie erzählen, daß ich meine alte dialogisierte Novelle „*Ohne Liebe*“ der „Freien Bühne“ eingereicht habe. Es ist mir gar nicht eingefallen. Herr Dir Schlenther, that mir kund, daß die Aufführung statt finden werde, und daß er hoffe, ich hätte nichts dagegen. Die Freie Bühne und - ich! Wann hat je etwas schlechter zusammen gepaßt? Und dennoch, das gewagte Experiment ist gelungen (Henn 764).

Eschenbach clearly never intended to have her novella turned into a play, let alone performed at the Berliner Freie Bühne, but did work to stage her novella (Henn 477). She describes the play and the Freie Bühne as the worst possible combination because of the atmosphere. Be that as it may, the first performance took place on the 30<sup>th</sup> of November 1890 and was performed regularly for nearly a decade. It traveled across Germany and to Eschenbach's home city of Vienna, which greatly pleased the author. The play was last performed in Eschenbach's lifetime in 1896 in the Hoftheater Meiningen in Rostock. As for the novella, it was never again published independently, but was included in numerous completed works of Ebner-Eschenbach and a few collected works. Most recently, it was published in 2005 in Susanne Kord's collection, *Letzte Chancen: Vier Einakter von Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach*.

The story of *Ohne Liebe* parodies the Austrian aristocracy and presents the difficulties surrounding aristocratic marriage. It begins with the birthday of young Emma, the Countess Lasswitz's granddaughter. Emma and her grandmother discuss the many trials that she has faced trying to find a suitable husband. Her current suitor, Count Rudiger, arrives and proposes to Emma, who accepts. Later, Emma receives a visit from Marko, a cousin and childhood sweetheart, with whom she had a falling out. Marko later married, but is now a widower struggling to raise an ill-behaved daughter. Marko and Emma decide that they no longer love each other, but Rudiger senses the tension in their relationship and ends his engagement with Emma. Upon learning this information, Marko focuses on his future with Emma. Dori needs a mother and they are fond of each other so they agree to marry "without love." The play concludes with Marko asking for the customary engagement kiss. Emma questions the necessity of this since they ostensibly are not in love, but Marko successfully persuades her.

## 2.2 The Reception of *Ohne Liebe*

The reviews from numerous newspapers and journals indicate that Eschenbach's single act play was a success. In response to the first show on November 30<sup>th</sup>, 1890 the stage director wrote Eschenbach a telegram saying, "Freie Bühne, Freie Runde / sendet dankerfüllt im Sinn, / fröhlichen Erfolges Kunde / ihrer fernen Dichtung. / Feiernd trinken im Chore / und dein Lob tönt warm und laut / *Ohne Liebe*, con amore /hat Berlin Werk erschaut" (Henn 764). The staff at the Freie Bühne was pleased with the

performance and praised Eschenbach's work. The telegram was then signed by thirty-three workers from the theater and received many positive reviews in the paper the following day<sup>2</sup>.

The *Neue Freie Presse* described the play as "ein sehr fein gedachtes und höchst anziehend geschriebenes Lustspiel voll anmuthigster Seelenmaleri" (Henn 419), while Karl Frenzel of the *Deutsche Rundschau* (1891) describes the play as "gemüthlich". Both are pleased with the performance, but neither mentions more about the play than just the characters and the pleasing effect on the audience. It is interesting, however, that Frenzel is not convinced that the couple marries without any love, as the play's title suggests. He sees in Emma and Marko a couple that, "nur aus Hochachtung heirathet, obgleich sie beide einander seit Jahren schwärmerisch zugethan sind" (Frenzel 132). Clearly there is more at work than just adoration or mutual respect. This is an idea that is not well represented in other reviews and about which I will have more to say later.

Other reviews give a general impression of the public reaction. In an 1891 *Berliner Couriers* supplement, the reviewer praises the piece as being filled with clever twists and witty punch lines. It received many cheers and a warm reception from the audience. The author says the play had "einen unbestrittenen Erfolg davon getragen" (Henn 416). From many reviews, this is all we can learn about the play. After playing at the Residenz-Theater in Berlin, a review from the *Literatur-Zeitung* on January 15, 1881

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<sup>2</sup> See Appendix for a transcription of the reviews

explains that it had a positive effect on the audience due to its graceful and elegant language. The author wrote that the play “...übte Eine erfrischende und erfreuliche Wirkung (...) das allerliebste Lustspiel „*Ohne Liebe*“ von Marie v. Ebner-Eschenbach...” (Henn 415). Reviewers detected a humorous attitude toward Emma and Marko’s relationship. Overall Eschenbach’s work was praised as being original but not significant (Henn 415).

The play would not be performed for another eight years after its initial debut, but it is not because of a lack of interest. In 1884, the director of the Deutschen Theaters in Berlin, Otto Brahm, wanted to perform *Ohne Liebe* alongside Hauptmann’s *Hannele*. He wrote to Eschenbach, inviting her piece to be performed, but wrote again later in September of 1896 regretfully retracting his offer, even though he continued to praise the work. (Henn 416). In 1889 it was performed again, but this time in her home city of Vienna. She described the event in her journal as fulfilling her greatest wish. As was usual her play was performed alongside another piece, this time by her friend Franz Grillparzer. Again the work was praised in the *Wiener Abendpost* and described as addressing the audience well and being a well written by Eschenbach, but yet again says little more.

Virtually all of the reviews fail to mention more about the play than just its plot. Specifically, none mention the many ideas of social reform that are prevalent throughout the play. The characters discuss education reform and how the young Dori

must attend school. They argue over the public schools system and governesses. Nor do the reviews mention any of Eschenbach's socialist tendencies or her progressive approach to sexual relationships. The reviewers are so intent on mentioning the light, comedic qualities of the play that they fail to mention its more serious underlying themes. Perhaps if Eschenbach's reviewers could have forgotten the gender of the author we would see more reflection and literary analysis of her work.

### 3.1 *Ohne Liebe* in the Context of Eschenbach Criticism

Scholars of Ebner-Eschenbach would agree that her works center on a few main social issues: the suffering of the lower class, the proper role of the upper class, and gender roles in marriage and society. Gender roles and love, for instance, are themes present even in Eschenbach's early works<sup>3</sup>. One such early work, *Die Prinzessin von Banalien*, can be taken as an example. According to Bramkamp, this text has been pushed aside by serious Ebner-Eschenbach critics and was thought to be mainly for children. However, it contains a very adult theme: the heroine of the story attempts to control the patriarchal dominance by entering a relationship on her own terms, not unlike the actions of Emma in *Ohne Liebe*. Bramkamp's research shows that even in Eschenbach's unknown works, she is still arguing that the only way for a woman to free herself from patriarchal control was to act for herself, breaking social norms and changing the definitions of love as is done in *Ohne Liebe*. Kord reminds us that Eschenbach, hoping to

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<sup>3</sup> See Bramkamp, Klostermaier and Kord

become the “Shakespeare of the nineteenth century” (Kord 2), wrote nearly thirty dramas, which often feature an unconventional heroine. In *Am Ende* and *Ohne Liebe*, for example, independent women make the choice to marry on their terms and not the terms of society.

In *Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach: Her Author, Her Time, and Her Critics*, Agatha Bramkamp claims that Eschenbach saw the world through a lens that she felt was natural and without prejudice, which evidence now dictates, could not be the case. Though she wanted her audience to read her works neutrally, Eschenbach must have seen a world where women were unable to marry on their own terms and were subject to the will of the patriarchal society. While this may have been true for Eschenbach’s world of the aristocracy, it was not necessarily true for the lower class thus losing neutrality. As Bramkamp argues, Eschenbach saw the world with her own prejudice. While we as critics are able to see this argument Eschenbach makes a statement that shows how she felt about her world view and her literature. Eschenbach states:

Die Frage sollte man mir nicht stellen, was ich mit dem oder jenem meiner Bücher gewollt habe. Ich habe nie etwas anderes gewollt, als die Geschichte eines Lebens, das mich interessierte, oder einer Begebenheit aus einem solchen Leben, so gut und klar, als möglich war, erzählen. Ich habe nie eine Tendenz verfolgt, oder eine bestimmte Wirkung auszuüben und nie erzieherisch zu wirken versucht. Mein Ehrgeiz war befriedigt, wenn meine Mitmenschen sich in dem

Spiegel, den ich ihnen vorhielt, erkannten und sprachen: ja, es ist wahr, so sind wir! (qtd. in Bramkamp 123).

Here we learn that Eschenbach wanted to her readers to see her works as neutral. She never wanted her readers to think she had an agenda or motive to her writing, but this is the naturalist fallacy. In fact, her work points toward a social agenda. Seeing through the naturalist fallacy is essential to the interpretation of her works.

This political interpretation becomes particularly intriguing when looking at the roles of women in traditional marriage. Kord finds that in *Ohne Liebe* Eschenbach is challenging the traditional role of women in marriage, in which the wife throws herself at her husband's feet in happy submission. Kord argues that *Ohne Liebe* advocates for the change of marriage roles, not against love all together. She says,

*Ohne Liebe* stellt nicht die Liebe an den Pranger, sondern den durch Liebesdiskurs bemäntelten Liebesmißbrauch bzw. Menschenmißbrauch. So lange Liebe als Verhältnis unter Ungleichen verstanden wird, ergeben sich daraus tyrannische Beziehungen (Kord 15).

Eschenbach did not mean to argue against love as whole, but rather focused on the marriage relationship. For too long, marriage acted as a vehicle for abuse. Women in particular, were suffering consequences because of being married to tyrannical men. Fortunately, the often oppressing traditional forms of arranged marriages or marriages out of convenience were fading quickly from aristocratic society (Kord 15). Marriage

should be looked at as a mutual agreement between a man and wife, not as one partner exerting force or dominance over another.

Many evidences that Eschenbach gives for an egalitarian conception of marriage can be found in *Ohne Liebe*. We first catch a glimpse of how Emma feels about marriage when she starts talking about Rudiger to her grandmother. Rudiger is adored by his family and they love him, but this is virtually sickening to Emma. She does not want someone who is seen as perfect by all because that would become a source of oppression in the marriage relationship. Her aversion to such a “perfect” man is palpable:

He never has debts, is never drunk, has never had a duel. He spends his days in the office and two evenings a week with his mother, surrounded by aunts and sisters and cousins, and all the ladies waving incents. Ah the one and only, nephew, brother, cousin! Ah the one and only! Are there any like him still? Oh, where does the lucky one tarry whom he will introduce and choose among his priestesses...? (27)<sup>4</sup>

Emma mocks his goodness in part because of what it should mean for her. Emma rejects Rudiger because he is a man who plays so well into his traditional masculine role that he would essentially compel Emma to worship him. This can be seen by his constant doting of Emma in the play. She would have no choice but to follow his every

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<sup>4</sup> For original German text see: Henn pp. 388-408.



command which would then put her on unequal ground in the relationship. Nevertheless, Countess Lasswitz points out almost immediately after Emma makes the above statement that Rudiger would be the rational choice. He is wealthy and has good standing in the community. The countess points out that "he loves you (Emma) with unmatched loyalty..." (27). But this is all too much for Emma. She does not want a husband who would worship her to the point of daily oppression. Rather Emma wants equality in a relationship, even if that means taking herself off the pedestal. She eventually tells Marko, "I want to be your partner and equal in all things that do not exceed my horizons" (50). Eventually, Emma ends the relationship with Rudiger and he accuses her of the inability to love. Kord argues that Rudiger does this to disqualify Emma from marriage and justify breaking off the engagement without losing his honor (Kord 15).

This agreement works for Emma and her love interests turn towards Marko. He has come to visit the family and brings his young daughter, Dori with him. Able to focus on her feelings towards her childhood sweetheart, Emma realizes that she would be willing to enter a marriage relationship with Marko because he is not the perfect man and is therefore unable to force her worshipful submission as Rudiger could. He betrayed Emma by marrying her friend years ago, but he was punished by his wife's oppressing and demanding love. He too understands how love can cause pain and be abusive. We see this when Marko imitates his wife saying, "Yes, my life, my love, yes

Marko, I torture you, but- out of love. Yes, I don't want to be without you for even a minute. I'm demanding, but - out of love" He continues, "And out of love she was jealous of the past present and future and particularly the past" (48). Marko's wife was domineering and he was essentially abused by the love that his wife used to demand so much of him. After discussing this relationship in detail, Marko and Emma are eventually able to conclude that they will marry based on equality.

MARKO. Do you want to be my good companion?

EMMA. Under certain conditions.

MARKO. Name them.

EMMA. I won't leave my grandmother.

MARKO. Of course, she will stay with us. Further?

EMMA. I want to be your partner and equal in all things that do not exceed my horizons, and to be your first priority.

MARKO. And you shall be. (57)

Emma has established the fact that she cares for not only the treatment of her grandmother, but also her role within the marriage. Emma is in control of the situation and makes a choice that represents not only social responsibility, but also her own interest. Both Kord and Bramkamp have argued that Eschenbach writes about the roles of women in society and that the heroines in many of her stories choose to marry on their own terms. *Ohne Liebe* is one such text.

### 3.2 Why “Ohne Liebe”?

Why call this romantic comedy *Without Love*? Emma and Marko of course claim they will marry without loving each other, but were this true it would make for an odd and unenjoyable plot. The majority of the reviews claim that the public enjoyed Eschenbach’s light humor, which suggests a playful love story rather than a tale of loveless practicality. Frenzel describes the play as the story of “ein Cousine, der von der Liebe seiner ersten Frau hart zu leiden gehabt hat, und nun die Cousine , nur aus hochachtung heirathet, obgleich sie beide einander seit Jahren schwärmerisch zugethan sind” (Frenzel 132). Clearly Frenzel, as I suggested earlier, was not fully convinced of the couple’s marriage without love. Why then did Eschenbach title the play *Without Love*? Clearly the play is about love, but Eschenbach wishes to approach this concept critically. Specifically, she does not reject the actual experience of love, but she is mistrustful of the signifier “love” as a cover for abuse.

Johannes Klein gives us a crucial piece of biographical background to the theme of love in Eschenbach:

Ihre Ehe mit ihrem Vetter – übrigens kinderlos – gab keinen Anlaß zu irgendwelchen Verwicklungen. Ihr Leben verlief ruhig und ohne Verwirrungen. Man hat gesagt, es habe bei ihr nie eine Leidenschaft gegeben, und sie habe auch niemals Leidenschaft erregt (qtd. in Brokoph-Mauch 57).

Whether or not this is a fair judgment, it does suggest that Eschenbach could objectively evaluate the political dimensions of love. She understood that there is much more at stake in sexual relationships than mere affection. As Brokoph-Mauch has argued, there is a socioeconomic responsibility at stake in any sexual relationship (57). This insight explains why Emma does not want to submit to the will of Marko, but rather marry on the basis of equality. It may also explain why Eschenbach chose to title her work “without love.”

One could also argue, however, that there is a positive concept of love in Eschenbach’s work, but it is can be hard to condone (especially for a nobleman like Rudiger) because it desires equality. This sort of love challenges the rules of the aristocracy. Imagine if Emma, driven by an egalitarian passion, would choose to marry the person she saw her as an equal, regardless of who the person was. Such a love is blind to social protocol, and Emma could have married one of the servants or some other commoner. The danger of this type of love is that it dilutes the aristocracy, and here we encounter a bitter irony. Eschenbach desired social reform, but she did not want the downfall of aristocratic society. As Enno Lohmeyer states:

Einen schmalen Pfad sah Marie von E-E zwischen Revolution und dem kritiklosen Festhalten am Status quo. Als Mitglied der Aristokratie gehörte sie einer Klasse an, die das Gesellschaftsbild der Habsburger Monarchie über Jahrhunderte entscheidend geprägt hatte, ihre Vorherrschaft nach der Revolution

von 1848 jedoch allmählich an die Bourgeoisie verlor. Die umstrittene Autorin glaubte an einen Wandel im sozialen Denken zugunsten verbesserter Lebensbedingungen der unteren Klassen, aber auch an die Bewahrung der Aristokratie vor drohender Selbstvernichtung...“ (180).

Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach recognized that fact that society was changing. She knew the aristocracy was losing importance and the common people were rising within society. Precisely as Loymeyer says, Eschenbach wanted to protect her class in the every changing world. If this is the case, then the title *Without Love* takes on another meaning. Emma does not want to marry out of traditional love, which would put her in an unequal position; but she is also concerned about a modern, egalitarian love that would threaten class structure. In order to preserve the aristocracy, there needs to be constraint on both kinds of love, and Emma satisfies this double demand by choosing Marko, who is both of the right class and willing to treat her as an equal. The family will be taken care of and Emma is able to live her life as she wants, not as is dictated to her by another. The title *Without Love* is therefore to be understood as a social contract. Emma and Marko marry without love so that they can meet their needs of their family and their class. The aristocracy is helped to remain intact because Emma and Marko choose to preserve it.

In *Ohne Liebe*, Ebner-Eschenbach addresses the full sociopolitical complexity of love. On the one hand, love is a Trojan horse than can lead to abuse by both men and

women (i.e. Marko's first wife) in marriage. In Eschenbach's ideal society, love must occur "without love" and under the guidance of reason to the benefit of society. On the other hand, Eschenbach wishes to protect the role of love and the aristocracy in the transition to a new egalitarian society, and Emma's "equal" is not by chance another aristocrat. Ebner-Eschenbach uses love to argue against traditional romantic marriages and lay the pathway for a future where women can reject the patriarchal society and love for themselves. Love is indeed everywhere throughout the play and though Eschenbach writes a naturalist, she uses this theme to push her own agenda of the modern women in aristocratic societies. In *Without Love*, Eschenbach shows how she is both a pre-modern and modern author who at the same time, integrates the old and the new ideals of love into the social orders of her day to preserve her own aristocratic class and advocate for social reform in all classes.

Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach's Without Love

Translator's Note:

The original text used for this translation was taken from the *Edward Blochs Theater – Buchhanglung* edition published in 1898. This edition contains the complete staged version of *Ohne Liebe*. The original German text page numbers were left in the translation for the convenience of the reader. The philosophy behind this translation was to stay as close to the style of language in the German text while providing an understandable English translation. When certain words in German had a different connotation in English, the best English words were chosen to represent the ideas presented in the German. The overall approach was to create an English version of *Without Love* that kept the same style and poetic skill with which Eschenbach originally wrote the piece.

Without Love  
A comedy in one act

Setting:

Palace of the Countess Lasswitz in Vienna.

*A salon in the palace of the Countess Lasswitz in Vienna. The room is decorated in the rococo style; the walls covered with brocade. A high center door leads into a reception room, on the left; a door leads to the living room of the Countess, on the right, a door to her granddaughter, Countess Emma Lasswitz. In the foreground to the right are a desk and an armchair, in front of a small couch. In the background to the left sits larger furniture along the wall as space permits. Laid out on the sofa, the armchairs, and the chairs is a mess of toiletries, clothes, hats etc.*

Characters:

Countess Lasswitz.

Emma, her granddaughter.

Count Rudiger.

Count Marko Lasswitz.

Dora.

Elise, Dora's Nurse

Servant

Scene 1.

Countess.

*(concerned with the ordering of bouquets, jewelry, books and albums that cover the table. Emma enters in a plain night gown.)*

Your birthday, dear child, congratulations.

Emma. *(kisses her hands)*.

Oh thank you! (Looking at the gifts.) Everything is wonderful. But that's just your character; such a choice only you can make. - Diamonds - reckless grandmother, now even diamonds - which I cannot wear, me, an old maid.

Countess.

So we wait, until the old maiden becomes a young woman.

6

Emma.

Hush! Let's not speak of such unpleasant things today - only of you, of your generosity. *(She surveys the presents all over again.)* - It is really, really too much.

Countess.

But I am giving for three, do not forget.

Emma.

How should I? You have never done me any good without saying, "in the name of your poor deceased parents." *(She leads the Countess to the sofa in the foreground, sits on the chair, takes both hands of the Countess.)* But you have spoiled me yourself.

Countess.

Spoiled?

Emma.

You made life too pleasant, too nice, too easy - grandmother, tell me again how old I was when my father died and my mother soon thereafter? I was there wasn't I?

Countess.

Approximately.

Emma.

So, I have now been with you for twenty-one years. They have gone by like a day, but to what end? Even if you have grown old without noticing, you are still old.



Countess.

At twenty-four?

Emma.

When I was sixteen and saw ladies of my present age mincing around at the ball, I thought, what do these old bittys want? Do they want to dance their way to a man?

Count

For you that's not necessary. The suitors come to us here at home.

7

Emma

God knows. Who would do such a thing?

Countess.

Now, now, Rudiger is one of them, and he loves you, not your money.

Emma.

Possibly, because he has enough. But grandmother, he is a family idol.

Countess (*impatiently*).

You always say that, but what do you really mean?

Emma.

What else would I mean but a person whose relatives idolized him?

Countess. (*as above*)

They do it because he deserves it.

Emma.

The pedestal isn't as comfortable as you might think, especially for the one on top.

Countess.

Where did you pick up such a phrase?

Emma (*puts her index finger to her forehead*).

I have it from here, and therefore it is not just a phrase. Think about it again – How has Rudiger incurred the adoration of his family? By mere virtues. He never has debts, is never drunk, has never had a duel. He spends his days in the office and two evenings a week with his mother, surrounded by aunts and sisters and cousins, and all the ladies waving incents. Ah, the one and only, nephew, brother, cousin! Ah, the one and

only! Are there any like him still? Oh, where does the lucky one tarry who he will introduce and choose among his priestesses, so that she may also seize the incents and -

8

Countess.

Silence! He loves you with unmatched loyalty, though (*looks her directly in the eyes*), at least apparently, unrequited.

Emma (*after a pause very seriously*).

I have also loved in this way for many years and am now finished with such love. He should follow my example. Indeed, I cannot love anymore. For me, Marko was the epitome of all masculine perfections and imperfections; he had all the qualities that I admire, all the mistakes that I could forgive. We grew up as neighbors, and even my nurse told me Count Marko was my future husband. One remembers such things, and so I loved him as a groom; however, he loved, as one loves a sister, and married my friend.

Countess.

Whom he made most unhappy.

Emma.

Or she him - who knows? (*After a long pause.*) He has been a widower now for three years.

Countess. Yes, and buries himself in Croatia on the estate of his deceased and leaves the management of his beautiful Waldsee to the officials employed there; that is terrible and a bad example for the whole neighborhood.

Emma.

How mean you are to him! Almost as bad as in those days, when I loved him, and (*laughing*) was infinitely unhappy.

Countess.

You've had your laugh. I have known much foolishness, but none so great as this love. Come, my child, you will only be fully healed from this disease, -the only one that has ever troubled you- when you make the decision -

9

Emma (*places both hands around the neck of the Countess, and looks her in eyes*).

To be Rudiger's wife. He is after all your favorite, this seducer of all grandmothers.

Countess (*trying in vain to free herself from her*).  
Stop it, you fool!

Emma (*hugs her and lets her go*).  
Forgive me! I will also be sixty, and then I will be in your shoes. When I think about that, I'm disposed to accept him; one must make the proper provisions for her golden years.

Servant (*notifying*).  
Count Rudiger.

Countess.  
There you have it. (*Straightens the bonnet. To the servant:*) Our pleasure. (*savant leaves.*)

Emma (*sighs*).  
Oh God! (*Gets up and walks to the table fussing with the gifts.*)

Countess.  
Emma, and if he proposes today?

Emma.  
It would be for the third time. Let's remain composed during this common situation.

Scene 2.

*Count Rudiger enters with bouquet in hand. He is blond, strong, carefully dressed, has a pretty face, wears a full beard, and sways his hips a bit while walking. He bows to both ladies and approaches Emma. She remains motionless and smiling at the table. Gradually losing composure, he stops in his tracks.*

Countess.  
Greetings, my dear Rudiger.

10  
Rudiger.  
Your Ladyship (*After briefly reconsidering, he turns, walks up the countess and hands her the bouquet.*) Allow me to offer you my congratulations on your granddaughter's birthday.

Countess.  
Me? Oh, I'm very surprised and happy to accept it.

Emma.

Bravo, Count Rudiger, You did that well. (*Goes up to him and offers him her hand. After some hesitation he offers her two fingers that he pulls back quickly.*)

I'm already looking forward to the birthday of my grandmother, when I will get a bouquet. (*Countess rises, places the flowers in a vase and remains in the background during the following conversation.*)

Rudiger (*Upset*).

You praise me – I am unusually fortunate.

Countess.

Yes. Indeed.

Emma (*looks at her disapprovingly*).

Don't take sides! (to Rudiger seriously.) Sometimes I'm taken back on your account.

Rudiger (*also serious*).

Only sometimes?

Emma.

Is that not enough for you? Well, now, if I never leave the pit of remorse that would again be too much for me (*She laughs*).

Rudiger.

I would like to laugh with you, I like laughing about a good joke, but yours - (*he shrugs*).

Emma.

-are not good. Am I good at mind reading or what?

11

Rudiger (*looks at her reproachfully. After a pause.*).

No, it can't go on like this. We must put an end to it; we must finally speak our minds.

Emma.

Finally? We have done nothing else for three years.

Rudiger.

And what is the result? We should come to a decision today.

Emma. How about if we sit down?

Countess *(to Rudiger)*.

Come here, my dear friend. *(Indicates a place at her side.)*

*(Position: Countess to the right, Rudiger sits on the sofa to the left, Emma across from them. She sits sideways in the chair and crosses her arms over the back.)*

Emma.

There you go again, two against one.

Rudiger.

Countess, I would act differently towards a man like me. - A man who with such devotion, such constancy- *(his voice fails)*.

Countess *(puts her hand on his shoulder)*.

Dear Rudiger -

Emma *(simultaneously)*.

Dear Count, if you believe I can't admire you, then you are wrong.

Rudiger. *(who has again composed himself)*.

Well, Countess, if I admired someone, I would not make him unhappy, I would do my best to return his feelings.

Emma.

Who told you that I have not tried to do my best?

12

Rudiger

Oh? then keep trying - with a bit of courage and it will happen. My mother, my aunts, my sisters would be happy -

Countess.

I would too.

Rudiger.

Also your grandmother, - her too – Oh how happy I myself would be, if I could make my grandmother happy.

Emma *(laughs)*.

Countess and Rudiger (*both*).  
Emma! Emma! Now she's laughing again.

Emma.  
But no. (*With resolve.*) You are a good-natured man, Count Rudiger, you are also devoted and reasonable, I believe that one could live with you -

Rudiger (*wanting to leap up*).  
Countess Emma!

Countess (*simultaneously*).  
O my child!

Emma.  
Stay seated, I'm not done yet: Could you live –on the conditions that you would concede to a presumptuous request.

Rudiger (*stunned*).  
Request?

Emma.  
Yes. - The Bible says a man shall leave mother, aunts, cousins and sisters, and cleave unto the woman.

Rudiger.  
I've heard the passage quoted differently.

Emma.  
It is usually quoted wrong.

13  
Rudiger (*after a long pause, anxiously*).  
You require it, I don't know, what I mean- I would not require such a thing of myself, but if you have the heart to do – so shall it be.

Countess (*with evident delight*).  
Rudiger, you are a noble man!

Rudiger (*somewhat troubled*).  
In any case, we will discuss it further.

Emma.  
Oh no.

Countess (*sternly*).  
What did you say?

Emma.  
I ask you, Count Rudiger, if you are decided to honor me by giving up the greatest treasure your love has ever known, what then?

Rudiger.  
Then I would hope for amends.

Countess.  
You would be right to demand it.

Emma.  
Yes indeed. But it could be, that I would not be in a position to meet this demand.

Rudiger (*beside himself*).  
And you won't be able. What a fool I am - someone else would have long since – but at last I see it too: You are incapable of love, are as cold as ice, and in the end, one must feel sorry for you.

Countess.  
Feel sorry for her indeed.

Emma.  
Because I am incapable of love? That is not the case. At some point I would have to confess it to you - I have been deeply in love before.

14  
Countess  
(*clears her throat*).

Rudiger (*to her, troubled, monotone*).  
Oh, now she has also been in love!

Countess (*to Emma*).  
You are ridiculous.

Rudiger.  
please - I must ask for a further explanation.

Emma (*warmly*).  
I am now going to pain you, Count Rudiger, please forgive me in advance. (*She offers him her hand across the table, he refuses it.*) My grandmother here would often say to me: What foolishness my child, you set your mind on someone whose not fond of you. Despite this warning -

Rudiger (*cuts her short*).  
Keep dreaming - about Marko! – Don't inconvenience yourself further. I would take it up with Marko - wonderful Marko!

Countess (*confidently*).  
Just do it. I do not believe the choice between him and you would any longer be difficult for my Emma.

Emma (*looks her in the eyes*).  
I don't either.

Rudiger (*misunderstanding them*).  
Well, In any case, you have the have the opportunity to make comparisons, Marko is here.

Emma (*with restraint*).  
Since when?

Rudiger.  
Since yesterday. Always the same, that one. He looks terrible by the way.

Countess.  
The mourning of his wife.

15  
Rudiger.  
Or the accusations of his conscience on her account, assuming he has one.

Servant (*announces*).  
Count Lasswitz.



Countess.  
There we have it.

Scene 3.

Marko

*(Enters. He is tall and slender, somewhat careless in his conduct and his attire. The features of the tanned face are irregular, his eyes clouded by forceful eyebrows. Mustache and sideburns are kept short, the thick, slightly graying hair forms a peak in the middle of his forehead is cut short. He approaches the countess and kisses her hand).*

Greetings, Aunt. How are you doing?

Countess *(coolly)*.  
Well, thank you.

Marko.

I am pleased to see that you also look well. *(Turns to Emma.)* And what about you, cousin?

Emma *(quiet and friendly)*.  
Equally well - which you find equally pleasing.

Marko *(sincerely)*.  
*(To Rudiger)*. Good day, Sir.

Rudiger *(stilted)*.  
The honor is mine.

Emma *(as above)*.  
Listen Marko, You could have had the pleasure earlier of inquiring after our wellbeing. Have a seat. *(She approaches the chair that she sat in earlier. Rudiger wishes to straighten the chair for her but she does it first, without realizing his intention. Deeply hurt, he returns to the sofa and sits down next to the Countess.)*

Marko. *(Searches in vain for a vacant seat)*.  
It's all taken. What is this display all about? Is today *(Striking his forehead.)* the twelfth of May? Your birthday, Emma. Forgive me, I should have remembered.

Countess.  
Why should you? - it hasn't happened for years?

Marko.

For years - quite right. But, even if I did not write, I remembered every twelfth day of May, that this day was the most wonderful of the year throughout our youth. *(He clears away the objects lying on an armchair and sits down next to the large table on which he rests his elbow.)*

Emma *(turns her head towards him)*.

Do you remember? We had such celebrations! Do you remember the ball in the garden for the village children? Where I always sat out, because my partners wouldn't leave the buffet table?

Marko.

Yes, yes, and the time when I rode at the head of a peasant-guard into the courtyard, and my horse was startled by the flags and threw me off in front of the astonished guests and laughing crowds.

Emma.

And you fell on a hunting dog that ran away howling in despair.

Marko.

I thought about suicide after that fall - but the fireworks shook me out of it.

17

Emma.

The fireworks always gave me the least enjoyment, because as soon as they were burnt out, it meant the party was over -Go to bed! - But on the morning of the thirteenth, I began to look forward to the next twelfth of May.

Marko *(to the Countess)*.

It is strange, aunt, Since we've been out of contact for so long - now I'm back with you and it's as if I had only left you yesterday.

Rudiger.

Strange.

Countess.

Indeed. I feel differently towards you. Dear Marko, someone who throughout all his childhood and youth was taken in to the home of a was like a son-

Marko *(pierced by her words)*.

Yes, yes, that was me. Go on, aunt, with your accusation, which is of course legitimate

and goes like this: "I, your distant cousin, was the only one who showed you any goodwill, the only one who possessed your trust. Why do you withdraw it in the moment that you have established your own home? Why, didn't I hear any more from you than would a stranger to whom you sent notice, of the birth of a daughter and a few years later the death of your wife? (*Thoughtfully*) Yes, why?"

Countess.

Why? - What do you have to say?

Marko (hesitates).

Emma.

Let's leave it till later, when-

Rudiger.

When it's just family is what you want to say. Just say it! Or not - it would be superfluous - I understand, (*rising*) and bid you farewell.

Countess (*grasping his hand*).

Dear Rudiger, what are you thinking? Just family means: in your presence.

18

Marko (*unpleasantly, surprised*).

In his presence? - (*Looks first at Emma, who calmly endures his gaze and then, at Rudiger. Pauses.*) Congratulations to you.

Emma.

Nothing definite has been said about it.

Rudiger (*biting his lip*).

No, because the Countess is not - how shall I say? - And I'm not pushy.

Countess.

I quite agree with you, my dear count, but sit down. - And now I ask that we change our conversation. (*To Marko.*) You have a daughter, three years old, if I'm not mistaken.

Marko.

Yes, just turned three

Countess.

And where is the little one?

Marko. Where else should she be than with me?

Countess (*animated*).

With you, and you didn't bring her? That is - forgive me! More of your inconsiderate behavior.

Marko (*good-naturedly*).

You call it inconsiderate?

Countess.

Where are you staying?

Marko.

In the hotel across from you.

Countess (*more animated*).

On the first floor?

Marko.

Yes.

19

Countess.

And the little one is in the room on the left with a bay window?

Marko.

Yes.

Emma

It's her!

Countess.

I know her! I saw her yesterday at the window and we amused ourselves for an hour. An angel - but delicate - and this delicate angel is put in the bed of a tavern. You feed her with the soup of a tavern, while her great-aunt lives across the street. Unforgivable! (*She raises, approaches Marko and stops in front of him.*) Your only excuse is that you don't know what you're doing.

Emma (*smiling to Marko*).

Don't take this the wrong way. My grandmother saw a three-year-old child at the window, therefore my grandmother is in love.

Countess.

Nonsense! – I want to have the little one here, Marko, I'll nurse her back to health.

Marko.

But Aunt, there's nothing wrong with her.

Countess.

Nothing? What blindness, God in heaven! She lost her mother and nothing wrong? (*Rings once, then twice.*) Go get her, and see that everything will be ready for her arrival in a quarter of an hour.

*(The servant and a maid have entered through the middle door. The countess quickly and quietly issues orders and dismisses them.)*

Emma (*meanwhile to Marko*).

Why do you hesitate? The little one must come to us.

Marko.

She must? (*A little embarrassed.*) Yes, there is a small problem - I don't know if she wants to.

20

Emma.

The three-year-old already has a will of her own?

Countess (*coming back into the foreground*).

Now go, Marko. (*She presses his hat on him and accompanies him to the door.*)

Marko.

I am a bit embarrassed Aunt - my little girl - she's a little misbehaved.

Countess.

Let her be as she will, I grant her hospitality.

Rudiger (*middle of the room, buttoning his coat*).

I wouldn't do this again.

*(The drop curtain falls and rises again within a minute.)*

Scenes 4 and 5.

*(The servant opens both wings of the center door. The chambermaid rushes in first; runs through the parlor into the room on the left. Marko follows. He carries Dori in his arms; who clings to his neck and presses her head against his shoulders while screaming with all her might. The Nanny hurries to her, with the countess right behind.)*

Marko.

Where? - Where to? *(Turns to the right of the front door.)*

Servant *(stepping forward, pointing to the left).*

This way, Count

Marko *(swings quickly to the left).*

Countess *(to the little one).*

Don't cry, my dear, my darling, don't cry, my angel!

21

Elise *(likewise)*

Pas avoir peur, ma chérie. *À*lise est là. *À*lise est là.<sup>5</sup>

Servant.

But Count, Count. *(Exit to the left.)*

*(The countess and Nanny continue their attempts to calm the child and the cries of the child continue.)*

Scene 5.

Emma.

Well then, Marko.

Emma *(coming from the right, out of her room).*

Our guest is off to a good start. *(She looks into the next room through the open door and laughs.)* A charming child, by my word!

Marko *(comes across half embarrassed, half annoyed).*

I've told you she should be left alone. One must always leave children in peace. The poor little thing was very content with her soup from the tavern.

---

<sup>5</sup> French: Don't be afraid my dear, Elise is here.

Emma (*shaking her head as she listens*).

She will also be content with us. (*She walks into the room on the left. For a moment, the crying of the child gets louder, then it gradually ceases.*)

Marko

(*has sat down, puts his elbows on his knees and his face in his hands. When the crying stops, he raises his head and watches the events in the next room*).

She's calming down. Look at that, Look at how earnestly my cousin speaks with her. She is certainly not used to the tone - Her lips are starting to quiver - It will start again soon, the crying - What a miracle! - She is giving her her hand; she's listening to her and laughing. - The poor little thing, now she's even laughing. This may well turn into a strong friendship.

22

Emma (*enters slowly and remains standing with hands crossed in front of Marko*).

You have a naughty child, my dear Marko. Seems you don't know how to raise children.

Marko (*stands up*).

No! - I don't know the first thing about fragile creatures; I'm struck by their weakness. I tremble at her fears. It's unbearable how intensely I feel her smallest pain. - and so I fulfill her every wish, her whims govern me (*angry*) and the nanny tries to outshine me and the servants follow our example, everything goes the little tyrant's way (*erupting*) and we are gradually educating the child to become a worthy member of the society of the holy apes of Benares<sup>6</sup>.

Emma.

A very gratifying result of upbringing.

Marko.

But it will not come to that. My mind is made up; I will soon give the child to Sacred Heart.<sup>7</sup>

Emma.

Where strangers will make good the sins of the father? I have better advice: Leave the little one with us.

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<sup>6</sup> A city situated on the banks of the River Ganges in the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh. It is regarded as a holy city by Hindus, Buddhists and Jains. It is one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world and the oldest in India.

<sup>7</sup> Most likely a Catholic school.

Marko.

What are you thinking?

Emma.

Something very practical. I know how to deal with children, I have learned it well in our kindergarten in the country.

Marko.

Kindergarten? Really? (*Somewhat mockingly.*) You concern yourself with public education?

Emma.

In its very modest beginnings.

23

Marko

Well then, I will follow your example at Waldsee, (*with a slight bow*) under your guidance.

Emma.

Let's stick to the matter at hand. Will you give us the little one?

Marko.

I would not think about it. Her aunt would soon wipe out what little good remains in the child.

Emma.

I'm here to keep things under control.

Marko.

But for how long? Rudiger will hardly wait until Dori's education is completed.

Emma.

Rudiger may have to wait even longer if he wants to wait at all.

Marko.

Meaning? - What does that mean?

Emma. That I've already told him many times: Please don't wait, in the end it will have been for nothing. I don't love him.



Marko.

This is no reason not to marry.

Emma (*looking at him intently and seriously*).

That's strange, what you just said. –Strange, by my word!

Marko (*laughs*).

You still say "by my word"?

Emma.

Still. I won't get rid of my old habits.

Scenes 6 and 7.

Countess (*enters from the right*).

Now she's eaten the biscuit anyway, think of it, Marko! And she is absolutely the sweetest thing that I have ever seen. She said "Gweat Aunt" to me and it made Elise do somersaults.

Marko (*indignant to Emma*).

Somersaults!

Countess.

Why not? She does them very well. (*To Emma.*) And she asked for you three times.

Emma (*happily*).

Really? Did she really ask for me? (*To Marko.*) You see, I was strict, I quarreled with her, that was something new for her, and novelty never fails to have an effect on children (*Exits to the left.*)

Countess.

Oh, Marko! I have such a great request: Entrust Dori to me for a year or two. Soon, we will travel to the country and then she will live in near you. You can visit her every day. - Fulfill my request, Marko, this child needs a loving environment. You men are so hard, you have no concept of patience, for the tenderness that a child needs - Dori is unfamiliar, shy (*angry, because he laughs.*) crushed by a single word.

Marko.

Crushed, her?

Servant. (*enters with a letter that he gives to the Countess.*)

From Count Rudiger. (*Exits*)

25

Countess.

He writes to me? - (*reads.*) Look - he's put out- and has every reason to be. You and Emma were unkind to him. (*reads.*) He doesn't want to come anymore – Oh my! - He is afraid to embarrass himself, oh! my! - In Emma's saying: "En Famille" has hurt him too much.

Marko.

She didn't say it, he put the words in her mouth.

Countess.

Nevertheless, we will try to patch things up with him. But for now, farewell. The food for the children has probably been served. (*Wants to leave.*)

Marko.

Is that a difficult task, to set things right with Rudiger again?

Countess.

It is exceptionally easy. (*For herself.*) She must have already started her soup.

Servant (*announces.*)

Count Rudiger.

Countess. (*Turns, already holding the handle of the left door.*)

Who?

Servant.

Count Rudiger.

Marko.

I thought He didn't want to come anymore?

Countess (*fighting back a small fit of impatience.*)

Fine, very fine. (*To the Servant.*) Let him enter.

Servants.

The Count wishes to speak to the Countess alone.

Countess.

Oh bother, alone! (*To Marko.*) After the soup comes a chicken fillet and green peas. I would have liked be certain that she enjoyed it.

26

Servant.

The Count waits.

Countess.

Lead him to the nursery.

Marko.

But, aunt, I beg you - *(Takes his hat.)* I'm going.

Countess.

You will stay, You will not stir from this spot. If the little one would call for you - what then? *(To the servant)*. Lead the count into the yellow parlor. *(Servant leaves.)* It's unfortunate that the good Rudiger had to come just now. Children are the sweetest at dinner and before bed. *(Exit through the middle.)*

Scene 7.

Marko *(alone)*.

My Aunt! She still outdoes me. No, little Dori, we will not stay here. We will travel. - Even if I'm in error, at least I recognize it and this is the most important step to overcoming them.

Scene 8.

*(Emma enters from the left, She's leading Dori by the hand. Elise follows with an irritated expression.)*

Emma.

Dori is to apologize for being so bad. Well, little one.

Dori.

Pardon, Papa.

27

Marko

"Pardon", the child says "Pardon"? That is an truly extraordinary. *(Caresses her hair.)*  
But we want to become stricter from now on. My Dori disgraced me today.

Elise (*piqued*).

Stricter? Disgraced you? qu'est-ce cela veut dire?<sup>8</sup>

Marko (*to Elise*).

Please take the child to bed. She's already asleep.

Elise.

Viens ma chérie, viens mon petit ange.<sup>9</sup>

Dori (*holds Emma's hand tightly*.)

Avec toi, avec toi!<sup>10</sup>

Emma.

Be good Dori. (*Brings her to the door where Elise takes her and leads her off.*)

Marko.

I really think you might succeed with her.

Emma.

It wouldn't be an accomplishment

Marko.

I couldn't do it.

Emma.

I am astonished. You, who as a youth had the fortitude of a man, you, the valiant crusader against injustice, knight of reason - as you called yourself - You become such a little mouse<sup>11</sup> and you have an urgent need to call for help when your daughter comes around.

Marko (*raises his head, looks at her in a friendly way*).

One of your familiar excesses. Truly, you haven't changed.

28

Emma.

---

<sup>8</sup> French: What do you mean?

<sup>9</sup> French: Come my darling, come my little angel.

<sup>10</sup> French: With you! with you!

<sup>11</sup> Original German: "du stehts unter Pantoffeln:" Wives were often tied closely to the house and thus wore house shoes or slippers often. Husbands who submitted to their wives were under the thumb and controlled by their wives. If a man was under a slipper, he was subordinate to his wife.

Semper idem<sup>12</sup>. Even after a long separation, my friends don't experience any surprises on my account.

Marko.

All the better if you remain the way you've always been.

Emma.

You know what? - Don't be gallant, it doesn't suit you. *(After a pause.)* Marko, I can't believe that you had so little regard for your poor little delicate wife, that you made her unhappy.

Marko *(looks gloomily to the ground)*.

That last part is true.

Emma.

A terrible thanks for her great love.

Marko *(jumps up)*.

Love! Love! - If only I didn't have to hear this word anymore.

Elise *(appears at the door)*.

Monsieur, la petite dort, le moindre bruit l'éveille.<sup>13</sup>

Marko *(quiet)*.

Elle dort? C'est bien, c'est très bien!<sup>14</sup>

*(Elise withdraws.)*

Marko *(quiet as before, looks at the clock)*.

This is her afternoon nap. It usually takes an hour. Just be quiet, be still! *(Tries to move the armchair near Emma with extreme caution. Startles himself and listens, calms down.)* No, it's nothing.

Emma *(in a hushed voice)*.

What did you say earlier? What word should not be said in front of you?

---

<sup>12</sup> Latin: Always the same

<sup>13</sup> French: Sir, The little one sleeps, the slightest noise could awaken her.

<sup>14</sup> French: She's sleeping? How good, how great!

Marko.

One that I heard mentioned far too often, as an excuse, a justification for so much injustice that was done to me and the pain I was made to suffer. My poor dear wife, unassailable in her weakness has forever spoiled not only the word for me, but also the feeling it designates. "Yes, my life, my love, yes Marko, I torture you, but- out of love. Yes, I don't want to be without you for even a minute. I'm demanding, but - out of love"

Emma.

Ssh! You'll wake the child.

Marko (*lowers his voice*).

And out of love she was jealous of the past present and future and particularly the past. It was a crime that I didn't come into the marriage as a blind fool. For a man who knows life, who's had experience in the world, how easy it is to deceive an unsuspecting woman. And he can't stop his deceit. (*Louder and louder.*) My enemies know that I am an honest man, but the one who idolized me did not.

Emma.

Ssh! Ssh!

Marko.

Whenever I left the house for a few days, I felt like an executioner, and I knew full well that my wife was pining away at home filled with fear and anxiety.

Emma.

That was sickly.

Marko.

Sickly? Yes, love is a sickness.

Emma.

At least not an incurable one.

Marko.

With my wife it proved to be.

Emma (*shocked*).

Marko, incurable - fatal?

30

Marko.

No, Thank God! It wasn't that bad. - She died from another fate, gently and quietly, her hand in mine.

Emma.

Poor woman!

Marko.

That's what I always thought when impatience threatened to overwhelm me. That's how I lived for six years struggling between indignation and compassion. And then my Aunt gets offended that I didn't write. What should I have written? (*Stands up.*) You know one thing will always remain a mystery to me: So many unhappy lovers have been immortalized through art and poetry, (*loudly*) why not the ones who deserve more pity, those who are unhappily loved?

Emma.

It is strange, but you don't need to shout about it.

Marko (*after a pause, quiet again*).

It wasn't because I forgot that I didn't write you. On the contrary, I thought about you in my most difficult moments.

Emma (*smiling*).

That's very flattering.

Marko.

That's true in the sense in which I mean it. I pondered. I said to myself, I can't remain alone. My life needs a woman, my child needs a mother and my heart needs a companion. So I came here, to ask you - I confess it openly to you - whether you would take on these 3 roles?

Emma (*quietly*).

You place much confidence in me.

31

Marko.

Is that a surprise? I've always had great confidence in you and always will. What do you think, Emma, if I had proposed to you six years ago, would you have accepted me?

Emma (*as above*).

Most certainly.

Marko.

What a shame! We would have had a peaceful marriage as good friends. But no, friendship was not enough for me, it had to be love. I had to conceive and instill passion. (*Presses both hands to his temples.*) But it's done, it can't be made right again. I am free once again, not yet old, rich - I went where I pleased and where I went I found no woman who did love me. On the estate in Croatia, every eager young would-be-bride in the neighborhood let me know I had stolen her heart. On the journey here, what a discovery - Elise loves me.

Emma.

You are a modern Orpheus.

Marko.

Without a lyre. Along the way they told me a continuing story of an Earl, who married a nanny out of irresistible passion. (*wistfully.*) Am I a jinx? - When I decided to ask the one that I know for sure does not love me: Will you take the old friend for a husband? - I find you half engaged.

Emma.

That obstacle will soon be remedied.

Marko.

What are you saying?

Emma.

But there is another who can't be put to the side.

Marko (*quickly*).

Who?

Scenes 9, 10, and 11.

(*Countess and Rudiger come through the center. They are having a lively conversation.*)

Countess.

I don't agree with you at all, my dear Count. (*In a hushed tone to Emma.*) What is she doing?

Emma (*also quietly.*)

She's sleeping



Rudiger.

Then I must stay here.

Emma.

A difference of opinion between the two of you? The world won't last much longer.

Countess (*to Emma*).

He finds it incompatible with his honor as a man to continue his pursuit of your hand.

Emma (*cuts her off, to Rudiger*).

Are you giving me an out, Count Rudiger? <sup>15</sup>

Rudiger.

One that I would not take in your place.

Emma.

I'll take it anyway. Don't be angry at me. (*Offers him her hand warmly.*) You gave me a way out of our engagement. Now I ask for your friendship.

Rudiger.

Which I cannot grant you. Ask your grandmother or your cousin for friendship. As for me - I'll take my leave.

33

Emma (*as before*).

Farewell, Count Rudiger.

Rudiger.

The same to you. I am sorry that I can't contribute anything to the fulfillment of your desire. My will was the best and my intention entirely altruistic.

Countess (*distracted, looks to the door on the left*).

You are so noble, dear Rudiger, always so classy -

Rudiger.

Do not flatter me in this regard. (*To Emma.*) Your happiness was utmost in my heart, not

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<sup>15</sup>Original German: "Gibst du mir einen Korb?" An idiom used when a young woman is given a choice to opt out of a marriage proposal. Originally believed to be tradition to give a bottomless basket as sign for not being ready for marriage.

See Meyers Großes Konversations-Lexikon, Band 11. Leipzig 1907, S. 481.

mine. If I were in your position and found a man who had only my happiness in mind, I would have appreciated him more.

Countess (*as above*).

Dear, dear Count (*to Emma*.) I feel as if I heard voices, she might already be awake.

Rudiger.

So there is nothing more for me to -

Countess (*turns to the left*).

Adieu, adieu, dear Rudiger. (*to herself*.) I will make him well again.

Rudiger.

May I speak with you once more? Countess.

Countess (*with willpower*).

Oh, of course - with pleasure.

(*Rudiger bows to Emma and goes with the Countess through the middle door.*)

Scene 10.

Emma.

Wasn't he rather rude to me?

34

Marko.

Why shouldn't he have been rude; he loves you doesn't he? (*Emma sits on the small couch to the right and Marko on the chair to her left.*)

Marko (*presses his face in his hands*).

What a pity, a pity!

Emma.

What do you mean?

Marko (*Pointing to the door that Rudiger left through*).

That only a minor obstacle was removed.

Emma.

I can't change it, the main obstacle remains.

Marko.

What is it? Say something. This uncertainty is a very unpleasant thing.

Emma.

You're wrong about me, Marko. I need to confess to you: I have loved you.

Marko (*moves away from her*).

Terrible! (*Gets up and, in distress, paces back and forth in the room. Whenever he comes over to Emma, he speaks, but only in broken words.*) But no. What fantasies!

Emma (always very quietly).

Tell me the plain truth, I don't want to deceive you.

Marko.

The truth? - I would have noticed something like this.

Emma.

That takes two. One person who notices it and one who lets it be noticed.

Marko (*remains standing*).

To love and not let it be noticed? (*Shakes his head.*) ...does not happen.

35

Emma

Generally not - but with me - I had a tremendous love for you.

Marko.

Had! – Time passed.

Emma.

But if it would return?

Marko.

Don't fear that. You would do well to fall in love for the first time with someone else, rather than fall in love with someone (*with emphasis*) you already loved.

Emma.

And the proverb: old love never dies?

Marko.

Old love is friendship. (*Wiping his forehead.*) That was necessary to frighten me. (*He takes*

*a chair from the back left and sits with his back against the wall. He sits as far from Emma as possible.)* Emma - Cousin – Should we talk honestly with each other?

Emma.  
How else?

Marko.  
Well, my friend - the obstacles would be out of the way – We no longer need to get to know each other. I just want to know one thing: How do you feel about me now?

Emma.  
I feel warm sympathy and heartfelt regret for you.

Marko.  
Why?

Emma.  
Because your best years have been spoiled.

36  
Marko.  
Emma , and yours?

Emma.  
Hush! It is not fitting to remind a lady of wonderful years that have passed. So, the regret is mutual.

Marko.  
The sympathy also.

Emma (*sits up a bit and bows her head*).

Marko.  
Moreover, I hold you in the highest esteem.

Emma (*as before*).  
Completely the way I feel about you.

Marko (*rises and bows*).  
I already spoke to you with a trust without limits. - Even about my longing for a good

partner. *(He sits down again, crosses his hands over his knees and looks at Emma with a long, loving look.)* Do you want to be my good companion?

Emma *(puts her arm on the table and her hand on her cheek)*.  
Under certain conditions.

Marko.  
Name them.

Emma.  
I won't leave my grandmother.

Marko.  
Of course, she will stay with us. Further?

Emma.  
I want to be your partner and equal in all things that do not exceed my horizons, and to be your first priority.

Marko *(nods approvingly)*.  
That you will be.

37  
Emma.  
I have as little talent for humility as I do for lying. I'm not helpless - *(smiling)* but I have no means to impress you.

Marko.  
You don't even need one. My absolute faith in you secures your unconditional self-worth.

Emma.  
Since we are to marry without love, we know nothing of their flattery.

Marko.  
Unfortunately I know enough of them to hate them - but, Dear! I've said yes so many times, Will you say yes for once? Will you have me?

Emma.  
Yes.

Marko (*Happily, but without leaving his place*).

This is the single most blessed moment of my life! Our union is sure!

Emma.

A wife! – what a word.

Scene 11.

Countess.

Poor Rudiger, now he is gone. He actually always says the same thing, the poor man!

Marko.

He also always does the same thing; that is why I don't doubt that he will return.

38

Countess.

Then I will try to appease him.

Emma.

Too late, Grandmother.

Elisa (*At the doorstep*).

Monsieur, la petite vient de s'éveiller (*Exits*).<sup>16</sup>

Countess.

De s'éveiller!<sup>17</sup> (*wants to follow her.*)

Marko (*stands in front of the door*).

Forgive me! - I must tell you something - Aunt (*in a trembling voice*) dear Aunt, I have the honor to ask you for the hand of Emma.

Countess.

You? (*Stunned to Emma.*) And you? .

Emma.

I've agreed.

Countess (*continues to be stunned*).

Do you still love him?

---

<sup>16</sup> French: Your lordship, the little one has awoken early.

<sup>17</sup> French: She's awake!

Marko (*quickly.*)

We aren't marring out of love.

Countess.

Rather?

Marko.

Out of admiration.

Countess (*to Emma*).

And your reasoning?

Emma (*mischievously*).

Insurmountable sympathy.

Marko (*to the Countess in a pleading tone*).

Your consent, dear aunt - and forgiveness for the guilt committed unconsciously.

39

Countess.

Unconsciously? - Well, I am an obedient grandmother.

Marko (*rushing up to her and kisses her hand fiercely*).

Aunt!

Countess.

You two are uncanny. Admiration? He's standing on the left and you're on the right. At least hold each other's hand to ease my worries.

Marko.

Nothing hinders that, (*Takes Emma's hand.*) You will not only be my good partner, but my good wife. My trusted loyal confidant! - Give me the engagement kiss.

Emma (*half laughing, half-stirred*).

Is that even necessary without love?

Marko.

It is most certainly necessary.

*(The curtain falls)*

The End



## APPENDIX

Articles reviewing *Ohne Liebe*

Wiener Abendpost Nr. 98 vom 30.4.1898

Das Kleine Stück hat sehr angesprochen (...). Was die Personen des Lustspiels sagen, ist anmuthender als was sie thun; was in ihnen und besonders was um sie vorgeht, bildete stets die Stärke der Frau von Ebner. Man kann die Dame die Poetin der Atmosphäre nennen, wie es Maler dieser Art giebt. (...) Gespielt wurde das alles wie gutes altes Burgtheater, nein, wie gutes neues Burgtheater, denn das wirklich Gute wirkt immer neu.

English:

The small piece addressed the audience well (...). What the people in the comedy say is more graceful than what they do. What happens to them and especially what is going on around them, always shows the strength of Mrs. Ebner. One could call her the poet of the atmosphere, just as there are painters of this kind. (...) The piece was performed like good old country theater, no, like good new country theater, because what is truly good always seems new.

Neue Freie Presse, 4. Deceber 1890 Nr. 9439:

(*Ohne Liebe*) ...gehörte nicht zu der gepfefferten Gattung, und wir können seine Darstellung in diesem Rahmen höchstens aus den Sympathien erklären, welche seine Verfasserin, Frau v. Ebner-Eschenbach, damit für die dichterischen

Bestrebungen der „Freien Bühne“ befunden wollte. Ihre dialogisirte Novelle in zwei Acten, „*Ohne Liebe*“, ist ein sehr fein gedachtes und höchst anziehend geschriebenes Lustspiel voll anmuthigster Seelenmaleri. Durch die sympathischen beiden Hauptfiguren, die der Comtesse Laßwitz und ihres Veters Marco, deren Herzen sich in späten Jahren nach langer stiller Neigung „*Ohne Liebe*“ finden, sowie durch das hübsche Beiwerk gewann das kleine Stück rasch die Gunst aller Hörer und wird sie auch über die „Freie Bühne“ hinaus behaupten.

English:

(Without Love) ... does not belong to fancy genre, and we can sympathetically account for its performance in this context, which is how Mrs. von Ebner-Eschenbach, wanted her poetic endeavors of the "Free Stage" to be interpreted. Her dialogical novella in two acts, "Without Love", is a very finely conceived and highly attractive written comedy full of the musings of the soul. The small piece won the favor of all listeners through the sympathetic main characters; the Countess Lasswitz and her cousin Marco, whose heart, is in his later years and after a long silent bias, was found "Without Love." The piece will also certainly go beyond the Freie Bühne.

Deutsch Rundschau. Bd. 66 (I-III 1891), S. 118-132. von Karel Frenzel.

In der naturalistischen Literatur werden die Hirngespinnste eines standhaften Denkens und Empfindens immer zahlreicher. Die zweite Aufführung des Vereins brachte nach einer platten und rohen Comödie „Angele“ von Otto Ehrlich Hartleben, die natürlich wieder als Spiegelbild der Berliner Gesellschaft gelten sollte, eine dialogisirte Novelle in zwei Scenen von Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach „*Ohne Liebe*“, voll harmlos gemüthlicher Plauderei: ein Cousine, der von der Liebe seiner ersten Frau hart zu leiden gehabt hat, und nun die Cousine „*Ohne Liebe*“, nur aus hochachtung heirathet, obgleich sie beide einander seit Jahren schwärmerisch zugethan sind. Ein Bildchen aus dem österreichischen adeligen Leben, ohne jede satirische Spitze. Die „Freie Bühne“ war während einer halben Stunde in ein Liebhabertheater für Grafen und Comtessen umgewandelt.

English:

In the naturalistic literature, the chimeras of steadfast thoughts and feelings are growing in number. After the second performance by the guild played a flat and raw comedy "Angele" by Otto Ehrlich Hartleben, which of course should be seen as a mirrored image of the Berlin society, they performed a dialogical novella in two scenes of Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach, "Without Love." This piece was filled with harmless genial conversation: a cousin, who has suffered from the love of his first wife, and then the cousin, who "without Love", marries only out

of respect, even though they both have been more than mutually enthusiastically for years. A little picture from the Austrian aristocratic life, without every satirical point. The "Free Theatre" was transformed in a half hour by the love of the count and countess.

Literatur-Zeitung Nr. 77 vom 15.1.1891

Eine erfrischende und erfreuliche Wirkung übte (...) das allerliebste Lustspiel „*Ohne Liebe*“ von Marie v. Ebner-Eschenbach. Hier befinden wir uns inmitten anständiger Menschen mit anständigen Gesinnungen und hören eine anständige Sprache. Man merkte es dem Publikum ordentlich an, mit welchem Behagen es die reine Luft, die hier weht, einsog. Dieses sehr anmuthige und vornehm-liebenswürdige Stück mit seinen reizenden humorvollen Wendungen und seiner originellen Grundidee: Umgebung der conventionellen Lustspielliebe, fand auch eine vorzügliche Darstellung.

English:

The most delightful comedy "Without Love" by Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach created a refreshing and pleasing effect (...). Here we are in the midst of honest people with honest feelings listening to graceful language. You could see it in the audience, with what pleasure it inhaled the pure air that blows here. This very graceful and elegant, charming piece with its charming and humorous twists its

original idea: the conventional ambiance of the romantic comedy was excellently represented.

Berliner Couriers Nr. 99, Beilage, vom 12.4.1891

Der Einacter "*Ohne Liebe*" (...) hat bei seiner zweiten Erstaufführung (...) einen unbestrittenen Erfolg davongetragen. Daß die zierliche Arbeit, mit ihrer Verschwendung von geistvollen Wendungen, ihren lustigen Pointen und ihren neuen, gut beobachteten Typen gestern Beifall und jubelnde Anerkennung errungen, ist am Ende kaum so überraschend, als die warme Aufnahme, welche das von der Parteien Haß und Gunst erfüllte Publikum der Freien Bühne dem Miniatur-Conversationsstück bereitet hatte. (...) Das Haus war gut besucht; allseitiger und nachhaltiger Beifall folgte der Aufführung des kleinen Lustspiels. Die Mitwirkenden wurden zu wiederholten Malen gerufen.

English:

The one act play "Without Love" (...) has in its second premiere (...) pulled off an undisputed success. That the delicate work won applause and cheering recognition yesterday with its profusion of clever twists, its funny jokes and its new, well-observed stereotypes is in the end, not as surprising, as the warm reception that the political parties and audience outside the theater had prepared for the miniature conversation piece. (...) The house was well attended by all

sides and sustained applause followed the performance of the little comedy. The participants were called repeatedly for a curtain call.

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