

**THE LIFE OF A  
GOOD-FOR-  
NOTHING**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9781760571658

The life of a good-for-nothing by Joseph Eichendorff

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.  
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

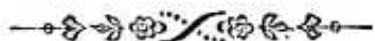
[www.triestepublishing.com](http://www.triestepublishing.com)

**JOSEPH EICHENDORFF**

**THE LIFE OF A  
GOOD-FOR-  
NOTHING**



THE LIFE OF A  
GOOD-FOR-NOTHING



JOSEPH, FREIHERR von EICHENDORFF

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN BY MICHAEL GLENNY

BLACKIE  
LONDON & GLASGOW

THE LIFE OF A  
GOOD-FOR-NOTHING

## I



Once more the wheel of my father's mill was humming and gurgling right merrily, the snow was dripping busily from the roof and the sparrows twittering and bustling back and forth as I sat upon the threshold and rubbed the sleep from my eyes; I loved to be in the warm sunshine. Then my father stepped out of the house; since daybreak he had been a-rummaging in the mill, his night-cap askew on his head. Said he to me: 'You good-for-nothing! There you sit sunning yourself, lolling and stretching your limbs to exhaustion and leaving me to do all the work alone. I can feed you here no longer. Spring's at the gate, go out into the world and earn your own bread for once in your life.'

'Well,' said I, 'if I am a good-for-nothing, so be it; I will set out and make my fortune.' Indeed I was glad to go, for I had lately been thinking of setting off on my travels; I could hear how the yellow-hammer, who all autumn and winter had piped sadly at our window—'Farmer, *hire* me, Farmer, *hire* me'—now in the sweet springtime had proudly changed his tune to a gay 'Farmer can *keep* his work!'

So I went indoors and took down my fiddle, which I played well enough. My father gave me a few groats for

the road and I sauntered down the long village street and away. To my secret joy I saw all my old friends and comrades going out to work, to dig and plough as they had done yesterday and the day before and would do forever, while I strolled out so free into the wide world. Proud and happy I called adieu right and left to the poor people, but not one of them paid me heed. It was as if life were an endless Sunday, and when at last I reached the open fields I put up my beloved fiddle and played and sang as I went along:

The man elect to God's salvation  
Moves in a world where wonders teem,  
Is shown the wonders of creation  
In mountain, wood, in field and stream.

Slow spirits by their firesides lying  
Are never quickened by the morn,  
They understand an infant crying,  
And care and need and hope forlorn.

Streams gush and babble down the mountain,  
A lark rides on the shining air,  
I, too, must sing with lark and fountain,  
Full-throated, fresh and free of care.

God's ways and works charm and content me,  
His streams, his larks, his heaven, his earth:  
Each field and wood in which he sent me  
Has brought me joy and blessed my birth.

As I looked about me there drew near to me an elegant travelling coach, which must have been driving along behind me for some time without my perceiving it, so full was my heart with music; for it was driving quite slowly and two fine ladies were stretching their heads out



of the coach and listening to me. One of them was especially beautiful and younger than the other, but in truth I liked both of them. As I stopped singing the elder of the two ordered the coach to halt and said graciously to me: 'Now there's a merry lad who can sing a pretty song.' To which I answered smartly: 'If it were to oblige your grace I could sing some much sweeter.' Whereat she questioned me further: 'And where might he be going so early this fine morning?' I was ashamed, not knowing myself whither I was bound, but said boldly: 'To Vienna.' They then spoke to each other in a strange language which I did not understand. The younger of them shook her head several times, but the other only laughed and laughed and finally called to me: 'Jump up behind, we are going to Vienna.' What an invitation! I made a bow and was up behind the coach in one leap, the coachman cracked his whip and we flew off along the shining road at a pace that made the wind whistle round my hat.

Village, gården and church tower now faded behind me as, new villages, castles and mountains appeared ahead; standing corn, bushes and meadows flew gaily by, countless larks sang in the clear blue air. I was too shy to shout aloud, but inwardly I rejoiced and stamped and danced about so much on the running-board that I soon almost lost my fiddle which I was holding under my arm. But as the sun climbed higher and higher, the heavy white midday clouds rose up round the horizon; as everything in the air and on the broad plain grew empty and a sultry calm settled over the gently waving cornfields, only then did I remember my village, my father and our mill, how

still and cool it had been by the shady mill-pool and how far, far behind me it now all lay. I had a curious feeling, as though I must turn back; I stuck my fiddle between jacket and waistcoat, sat down pensively on the running-board and fell asleep.

When I opened my eyes the coach had stopped under some tall lime trees, beyond which broad steps led between columns up to a stately castle. Beyond, I saw the towers of Vienna through the trees. The ladies, it seemed, had long since alighted and the horses had been unharnessed. Sitting there all alone I took fright and as I ran into the house I heard laughter from a window.

I was wonderfully pleased to be in this great palace. As I cast my first looks around in the cool, spacious entrance hall, someone tapped me on the shoulder with a stick. I turned round and there stood a tall gentleman in livery, a broad sash of silk and gold hanging down to his waist, a silver-topped staff in his hand and an unusually long, curved imperial nose on his face, as grand as a puffed-up turkey-cock, who asked me who I was and what I wanted here. I was dumbfounded and speechless with fear and amazement. At that moment a host of servants came running from above and below stairs, saying nothing, but looking me up and down from top to toe. Then a chambermaid (as I later learned she was) came straight up to me and said that I was a charming boy and that her gracious mistress wished to know if I cared to serve her as a gardener's lad. I clutched my waistcoat; my few groats must, I suppose, have been flung out of their pocket by the jolting of the coach and were gone. I had nothing but

my fiddle for which, the gentleman with the staff had said as he walked by, he would not give me a penny. In my anguish at this I said to the chambermaid, 'Yes,' still gazing sideways at the menacing figure who continued to pace up and down the hallway like the pendulum of a church clock and who was just approaching again from the further part of the hall with awful and majestic tread. Finally the gardener appeared, muttered into his beard something about vagabonds and peasant bumpkins and led me to the garden, subjecting me to a lengthy homily on the way: how I was always to be sober and industrious, not to wander abroad, not to waste time on unprofitable and useless occupations and how I might then, with time, come to some good. There were many more fair, well-phrased and useful precepts, but I have meanwhile as good as forgotten them all. I was still not entirely sure what had happened to me, but merely answered Yes to it all, for I felt like a bird whose wings had been doused. At least, thank God, I was assured of my bread and butter.

Life in the garden was pleasant. I had my daily fill of hot food and more money than I needed for wine, only unfortunately I also had rather much to do. I delighted in the temples, bowers and fair green alleyways and would have loved them more had I but been allowed to walk round them at my ease and in sensible discourse as did the gentlemen and ladies who daily visited the garden. Whenever the gardener was away and I was alone, I would at once take out my short pipe, sit down and imagine all the polite turns of speech which I should address, were I her suitor, to the beautiful young lady