In this uncommon way.

As a result of my economic condition.

That can be read in the Mitau Intelligencer, year 1809, number twenty-four, it concerns a certain Boehlendorff, Kasimir Anton Ulrich Boehlendorff, native of Mitau, who requests the Baltic commercial firms to raise a letter of credit for one hundred thalers payable at Bremen.

Boehlendorff. What does one know about

Boehlendorff?

In Rodenpois parsonage they say: Young person of flighty ways, the hair on the nape of his neck would suffice for half a sheep; but that was six years ago, and backbiting goes on only so long. And *Hofmeister* Bendig in Little Wenden says that Boehlendorff had written a small book of poetry, published in

Berlin, in general was taken up with the Muses, in Jena, and, as one heard, in Homburg, among poets, who roved about the court there, around a landgravine or princess, but Bendig is a sansculotte. And even that was some time ago. But Boehlendorffian poems do exist. For General Rosenberg's wife's eightieth birthday and also this one, published in the *Intelligencer*:

Shall I ever onwards wander, Seldom pause, never repose.

Author unnamed.

No, it's not by Petersen, confirms Editor Hensler. Therefore, as we said, by Boehlendorff. And the request now? But no one will answer that. Behrens, Hartknoch, Ströhm, good Lord, no.

Boehlendorff says, Geheime Rat Woltmann has offered him a professorship. Where then, in Bremen, whereabouts there? But is he in Mitau now anyway, this Boehlendorff?

Now he'll probably offer his writings to our publishers, says Editor Hensler. And who then is going to reply to him? Good Lord, literature.

Ugolino Gherardeska, Tragedy, printed Dresden, 1801.

Fernando or The Consecration of Art, Dramatic Idyll, printed Bremen, 1802.

"History of the Helvetic Revolution," in

four volumes, in Woltmann's History and Politics, parts ten and eleven.

It's possible that he was something in Germany. But now he's here and he's no use to us.

It's been going on like that for quite a while, the young people with the most brilliant talents as one hears again and again, fly away, they are a sensation and finally they come back to us, unjustly dissatisfied, and for that we let them study. *Primarius* Heintze said so, and so does Parson Giese's wife from Rodenpois.

And there she is riding to Podekay with the Baron von Campenhausen in the Campenhausen coach, they have just left Henselshof behind them when the Baron says: Well,

my dear.

In this uncommon way. As a result of my economic condition.

Rain. There is the rain. The rain rains. Behind the rain the void. Which is white. White hair, of a creature without eyes, which lifts up its white face over the edge. Over the edge. Which edge?

The earth used to be a disk, then a sphere, now it's a disk again. And where I tread, it sinks in beneath my feet, the black earth yields more than the white, it sinks in wherever I walk — Galtern, Strasden, Rittels-

dorf, Walgalen, Birsch — and I tread down a whole wide valley, on this disk.

And now the rain has come. That is the rain. The rain rains. But one day or one evening the sea comes over the sand, over the dunes, comes and falls into the valley, everything drowns — Galtern, Strasden, Rittelsdorf, Walgalen, Birsch.

Herr Baron cries Kaschmich the gypsy stableman and comes running, but who's fallen over now, Herr Baron.

Right, right, says the one addressed, yet he doesn't rise, but crawls towards the fence, towards a decorticated, bleached stake, and feels his way up with his hands.

Everything recorded, he says, and feels beneath his fingertips the flat paths which the bark beetles have made. Everything recorded. The valley, and how the flood waters plunge down over the valley, towards evening.

But, Herr Baron, but her gracious mistress, the Baroness, did say.

Right, right.

So they go back, in the rain, the little gypsy and the tall barefooted one with the ill-fitting trousers, to the estate, across the sheep pasture.

Let him go, Kaschmich. That's what the Baroness had said. But no, says Kaschmich, that's not for Kaschmich. Kaschmich brings Boehlendorff back to the entrance gate and into the house, and not through the servants' entrance, but up the front drive.

Boehlendorff, you shall instruct my sons, you have studied such things, Boehlendorff,

so go and get your clothes.

He showed up in the district for St. John's Day and as one heard tell stayed, if one could call it staying, in the parsonage and on the estate of Baron Klingbeil's wife, here and there, ragged, without papers; but still it was Boehlendorff, with his talk about the sea, the Unger newspaper appearing somewhere in Prussia, the Geheime Rat Woltmann, the Messieurs Herbart and Fichte, a sailor named Sinclair, presumably either an able seaman or an officer, to judge by what he said.

He has already spent weeks here, on estates, in the Galtern parsonage, this Boehlendorff, but as from today and as long as he is dressed as a person of respectable descent, in other words as a person: Herr Hofmeister, a gentleman, that is to say, Herr Hofmeister Boehlendorff. Kaschmich, the Baroness calls.

Yes, I know, answers the servant Kaschmich.

What does a bishop do, Herr Hofmeister? There they come, or there comes the revolution and it is already here, and he sits in the church, gaily attired.

Henri, says Boehlendorff, they are Calvinists in Switzerland.

Well then a dean or a clergyman.

Henri is the youngest of the three Messieurs Klingbeil; he asks questions. The sixteen-year-old doesn't ask questions, the seventeen-year-old doesn't either.

In Riga, says Henri.

In Riga there were bishops, yes. One of them drank until blue in the face, another, a balmy mice catcher, the others put on coats of armor and hunted the people in Latgale down towards Lithuania or up beyond the Narva. We won't talk about that.

In Lausanne, says Boehlendorff, in the year 'ninety-seven the revolution stood at the house gates and came out onto the streets and into the cantons of Vaud, Lower Valais and into the city of Geneva. We were standing on the other side of the lake, the lake is big, the visibility was good, the opposite shore appeared close enough to touch. We called over to the opposite shore, they must have heard it over there, in Evian, in Thonon, in all of Chablais; it seemed to us as if the whole world went about with arms outstretched.

Herr Hofmeister, Madame Mama sets great value upon our avancement in French.

That's the two eldest again.

La Harpe, says Boehlendorff, called upon

the French, but before they came, the cantons, the councils and the leading families already had their people ready and sent them into Vaud to the incendiary centers and into the protectorates and the common lands.

And so the revolution went astray, say

the young Messieurs Klingbeil.

But in 'ninety-eight the French came with Peter Ochs' new constitution.

And you immediately ran off to Hesse, Herr Hofmeister.

I have written about that, says Boehlendorff.

He takes up position at the window. Early afternoon. It looks autumnal this year, already in August. We'll carry on tomorrow. French.

Boehlendorff stands at the window. His gaze passes over the meadows. Outside it grows barer and barer. The rye has gone. The birds fly up from the pea patch, motionless in the air as though far behind fences had been erected, high up in the air, but not for the birds, who alight upon them before they fly away beyond them. These fences, which Boehlendorff sees, are high and bleached, but not enough against the sea when it rises, wall high, piles up wall upon wall, and strikes downward over the paling, plunges, fills the valley which has been trampled down, travels gurgling over Galtern, Strasden, Rittels-

dorf, Walgalen, Birsch, swirling a crest of foam around the church tower and a smaller one around Pastor Riechert's black-tarred clogs, which are swimming about there.

Everything recorded. In the book of history on the barn doors, to be read in the woods, on the chopped off trunks, and on the

earth before it rains.

Herr Baron, says Kaschmich.

Right, dinner, right.

That night, Boehlendorff was out again. Will someone see him as he runs across the heath? Above him clouds chase, cover the moon, set the moon free again, its light darts about like a pack of dogs on the heath, as if avoiding one another or lunging hither and thither, suddenly it flings itself far out in front as if on a scent.

Boehlendorff runs along in front of the light, with arms flapping. Talks like a mute. Nobody's on the Courland road this night, who is there to hear him? The fog has the taste of extinguished fires.

In a nice little tutor's frock coat, a bit of embroidery at the top, sleeves much too

short.

There comes the Behrse, clear and even over the stones and here on the washed up deposits above the sand, a rivulet, past the woods and the ruins of the left bank. Across the way lies Doblen, houses and a sandy road. And broad daylight now, and Boehlendorff stands on this sandy road, wearing shoes, and his tutor's frock coat.

People come by and show him into the parsonage. And he sleeps away a day. In the evening they take him with them, combed, there is a festivity at Counsel Meyers'.

Herr Boehlendorff, says Meyers, who is a man of letters, and has been writing a his-

tory of the Duchy for some time.

But he's said to have composed an ode to Catherine, some time ago, which was taken amiss, because he called the Empress Aspasia, and people took it that he saw himself as Pericles, the cheek of it!

Meyers, white-haired, with closed shirt collar, Meyers says: Unfortunately never had the honor, the pleasure's all the greater now, have heard a lot nevertheless.

And then straight away a question, after two little glasses: We have this Napoleon behind us, we have abolished serfdom in the provinces and kept our nobility, gotten a university, my question: the young people with their fire — one recalls — what are they doing, where are they directing their fire? We see before our eyes, everything falls back into place, the Alliance.

Yes, it all falls back into place, says Boehlendorff, it all cools down, isn't that true?

Boehlendorff, says Pastor Beer, you are a

poet, aren't you.

But that's just what I was driving at, says Meyers. The fire of youth in other words, immortalizes itself in poetry, what a flowering of the arts is at hand.

Boehlendorff helps himself to a drink and

lets it spill over.

But one has heard, my dear Boehlendorff, and of course read, you went around with a whole swarm of poets in Germany.

Taciturn, Boehlendorff, put out?

With a whole swarm. Try to remember: Neuffer, Schmidt, Wilman, Zwilling, Sekkendorff, Magenau, a certain Hölderlin, Sinclair.

But surely not all at the same time? What was it like? Master Hölderlin went to live at glazier Wagner's, in Homburg the air is good, Herr von Sinclair went to court, Zwilling set his heart on a uniform.

Well, Boehlendorff, says Pastor Beer.

It wasn't like that, says Boehlendorff slowly, and now the sentence Boehlendorff brings forth wherever he goes, here in the provinces, whose answer Boehlendorff reads on the wood, the wood of the fences and the wood of the barn doors, and on the earth during the rain, the sentence families object to and Herr von Campenhausen and Pastor Giese's wife, the sentence with which Boeh-

lendorff steps out of this drawing room as he stepped out of the folding doors of the estate houses and the french windows of the parsonages: How must a world be created worthy of a moral being?

Moral being, oh for God's sake. Everyone is that, or thinks he is, wherever he goes, this

Boehlendorff. Moral being.

And a world?

The valley of shadow imposed upon us as an ordeal?

But which one day will happen.

And be created?

And must?

We all had ideas one time or another, says Pastor Beer. And, as they say, water subsides.

And the people, what do they say? When he tells of the revolution of the Franks and of the Helvetians? Around a lake and unimaginably high mountains. What do the people say?

Sit and cover their faces with their hands, sigh through their fingers: horrible. With

eves closed.

When Boehlendorff has gone out they say: Good person, the *Hofmeister*, that fellow.

And the others, when Boehlendorff has also gone out, through the drawing-room door?

Meyers says: The tax reform, as I see, is

that the ordinances and directives are henceforth complete at hand, fifth volume of the laws of the Reich, Ustav on imposts, *Titular*rat Murchgraf in Mitau is submitting the translation.

In other words, as has been, says tax collector Bergmann, the communal courts shall determine the local rates to be paid according to the number of souls in the audit, Article 205.

Indeed, in pursuance of the Ordinance of August 25, Paragraphs 23, 188, 189, Article 12 will be widened insofar as, in addition to the usual police measures, in case of dereliction of payment the prospect of military action is expressly held out.

But not with us, says Bergmann, who doesn't have these ordinances in the new, complete form and probably doesn't need them either. The tenants pay and that's that.

Certainly, but Paragraphs 188, 189 expressly fix payments on the part of the estate owners which will be claimed for the crown imposts in the event the tenant is sentenced to work off a debt to the landlord.

Don't be ridiculous, says Bergmann, in the first place they will pay, it will keep on going like that, and secondly the ordinances governing the details to be given, allow as much freedom as the winter has in Great Russia,

one leaps into a sleigh, and it's off amidst the ringing of bells, across a marsh, a lake, a snowed-in village, and who knows what else, but who does know anyway, accountancy accounts for everything.

One of the cute sayings of the Honorable District Receiver of Revenues, isn't it, which has already reached my ears, says Meyers, but of course: Courland and Livonia as before, 2 rubles 58 copecks, excepting those well-known lists, concerning scholars and such like. Which Murchgraf by the way will go into in detail.

Is everything falling back into place or is everybody cooling off? Who's cooling off? What is that actually? And moral being? And be created? And must? Accounting accounts for everything.

And for a time the restless one disappears. He's seen on the dry bank of the Livonian As, and on the left one too, the one with the many small tributaries, and he crosses over the Dvina, there where the green Ogre river discharges itself into the murky current, quickly as if by bounds, he goes upstream. Green water glass-like. And now from both banks the trees come down to meet the scanty reeds, and the river bottom is of red rock, hoisting itself up out of the current and pushing the sandbanks back into the woods, it

stands washed smooth and red, as a wall, and even autumn is red here in these woods, the leaves are flying over the river.

Boehlendorff, Boehlendorff, cry the birds

and turn away from him.

Boehlendorff walks along the stone bank. He stands still and follows them with his eyes. And finds the writing again, beneath his feet the signs, carved into the stone. Upon which people have walked, tracks, foot tracks. That's what he has to talk about, in Adsenau and in Laubern, where he leaves the woods and ends up finally on the plain on the northern bank and now lives in the wood villages, for a time.

And in the spring Baron Fircks meets him outside the little town of Kandau. He's kneeling on the town wall and scraping the earth from a stone slab, but the slab is bare. So he scratches the signs, as he's read them again and again, with his nail upon the decaved surface and then follows behind Fircks into the winding streets.

Summer heralds itself prematurely with thunderstorms. The storm hurls a few old trees over the wall. Then the nights become clear, the moon is white and seems to stand still. The rats come out of the gateways and storehouses above the market place and march in a great host, filling up the breadth of the street, up to the edge of the town and beyond, past the wooden shacks, out along

the moat, up to the brook.

Past Boehlendorff, who's walking around up on the wall, over the filled-in vaults, above the hollow clang beneath the stone slabs, which follows his steps. From the remains of the corner turret the musty odor rises up and mixes with the reeking of the black alders.

Not another word. Up over the silence every day from the valley meadows rises the morning, gray and white light, as if cut in

pieces by the noise of the peewits.

The mad Boehlendorff is in Kandau. As is known. Better than him coming here, says Fircks to his Baroness. In the autumn we'll ask him to join the hunt, then we'll have something to laugh about when he runs away frightened by the cries of the beaters.

Only, autumn doesn't come that quickly. The un-German villages, as they are called, lie on the road to Zabeln. Here Boehlendorff was seen walking along behind a team of oxen. Again the signs. On the ropes, on the implements. The traces of the hands.

Here, someway after Walgalen, Kaschmich, who's on his way with the horses to Strasden, finds him and addresses him, but Boehlendorff waves him off with the same motion as the Baroness Klingbeil, which she

then repeated that evening when Kaschmich told her about the encounter.

Rain. That's the rain. The rain rains. The earth sinks in beneath my feet. I tread this valley down, the black earth yields more than the white. And thence then comes the sea, everything drowns, Galtern, Strasden, Rittelsdorf, Walgalen, Birsch.

And everything recorded.

The birds fly up from the pea patch, away beyond the fences, which Boehlendorff sees, in the air, high and bleached, but not enough against the sea when it rises and plunges over them and first filling up the valley that's been trampled down and then the land, which will rise up once again, but then fall back. There'll be nothing there. I can go away.

I come but to others yonder, but ne'er kindred spirits have won, know of none.

Thus continues the poem, the one mentioned in the *Mitau Intelligencer*, it's still remembered.

The reflective Marienfeld, who walks about behind the dunes, a familiar figure to children and grown-ups, forgotten by his church board in Riga, but who is satisfied, or has become so, to be forgotten, near the Gulf of Riga, in a village behind the sand, behind

the Angern lake, he gazes down upon himself and confirms the sameness of the times by his coat, always the same one for the past decade.

He came here, went up to the castle, hid himself away in Angels' Cloister, as the parsonage is called here, from where he emerges every afternoon, to walk around behind the dunes — always in the same coat — the familiar figure Marienfeld, preacher at Markgrafen.

He didn't once go abroad, not to St. Petersburg, not to Prussia, always remained here. Hedges and lilacs, nothing to be seen there, not the fences, not the signs on the wood.

Now all that stirs in him like the wind from Syrve or Abro which comes running from the southern spurs of the island of Osel, over the water of the bay, but probably from even farther away only bypassing Syrve and Abro, farther away, from the open sea.

The ships move past Markgrafen so tranquilly, towards Dvinamünde, with still sails of frosted glass. To think that they came over the sea, and one or the other, which used to move past, come no more because the sea has taken them away, shattered and smashed with storms and great waves, higher than the coastal woods.

Marienfeld has a picture at home which

was given to him, it depicts the sinking of a ship, a heaven of fire and blue smoke. Non mergimur undis, says preacher Marienfeld when he stands in front of it, and gazes down upon his decade-old coat, casts his gaze down upon his long, jutting-out pointed shoes, before he goes out through the french window.

Now all that stirs in him like the Syrve or

Abro wind.

What is such a person looking for here, says Marienfeld. Always talking of such things. But then he should go, to Helvetia or Jena.

Or Bremen.

Go, Herr von Boehlendorff, says Marienfeld, and goes his customary way in his customary manner, behind the dunes. And is frightened at his own words: There he sees Boehlendorff incarnate in front of him, not five paces away, the arms firmly to his side, as though he were holding himself together, drawn up, bent slightly forward.

A short walk, Reverend?

Herr Tutor, says Marienfeld, avoiding the condescending designation *Hofmeister*, is Herr Tutor likewise taking a look at God's nature?

Not really, says Boehlendorff, I've been following you, I'd like to know.

Herr Tutor, you ought never to follow anyone around, ought not to be so much out

and about. That's what his Lord the Baron

says.

I beg your pardon, says Boehlendorff, and Marienfeld answers and talks and doesn't notice: Boehlendorff starts at this word, or that expression, or an intonation: You go into the people's houses as one come from far off, with the standards of a foreign world, you disturb the peace, with things which are beyond the people's comprehension, there are refusals to pay imposts, animosity has even reached the church door.

Marienfeld, who was looking down at himself while talking, takes a step back, aghast, stretches his hands out towards Boehlendorff, raises the right hand as if to make the sign of the cross, as if against the devil: Herr von Boehlendorff.

Bastard, hisses Boehlendorff, between his teeth, you're the one, you talk the people into it: that they scrape along on heavenly rewards, in their sweat and in the rain...

Herr von Boehlendorff.

Bastard, says Boehlendorff, I'll be sitting there in your church and will read you off the signs from your church benches, accounting accounts for everything.

Marienfeld stays where he's standing.

Boehlendorff turns away, towards the dunes. The evening comes lightly in pale colors. Up from the water the stillness treads

across the sand. From the top of the dune one looks out over the bay and south across the long stretched-out lake, which accompanies the clear open water with its own dark color, between sand and fields and patches of wood, far away down there, towards Angern, to the pointed church tower and a shining roof in front.

For this Boehlendorff, whom Marienfeld caught sight of on the dune on April 24, 1825, before he made his way off with cold hands inland, for this Herr Tutor, Marienfeld, on the third day following, delivers the funeral oration.

And he didn't have to do it.

Owing to a sudden illness of Mme. Baroness, Herr von Eller did not appear. He didn't have to. Could have done so though. The children, the two girls were brought to Dorotheenhof to Aunt Gawehl yesterday.

But who is there anyway?

Old Fräulein von Zandikov. So, there is someone from the estate after all.

And the local teacher Schiemann.

And the locals.

Preacher Marienfeld gazes down at his slightly grayed robe and doesn't recognize himself. Boehlendorff?

He would have to talk about Boehlendorff's parents and about his kinsfolk, recount the merits of the deceased, sketch in the course his life had taken. What does one know of Boehlendorff?

He shot himself dead. After he had lived here a year almost. Tutor Boehlendorff, gray, long and thin, in the fiftieth year of his life. What kind of death is that?

Hard to talk about. Marienfeld isn't likely to learn how, nor are others, if anyone, then Marienfeld. He can recite a few lines from a slip of paper the gray estate Fräulein gave him. From the window-sill in Boehlendorff's chamber.

Cast my wreath to torrents flowing, alas! my last most precious Good faded by the with'ring glowing!

He can say the unhappily departed one had clung to his high ideals in the midst of the contrarieties of this world, the deceased's writings bear witness to this, and the praise of the fatherland shall not be denied them in the years to come.

Does he say that?

He says something about the storms of desperation and about a security that is concealed and alone. Marienfeld has a picture at home that was given to him, in front of it he says: Non mergimur.

But he speaks too long, this Marienfeld. The wind can do it better anyway. It rushes over the graves, every day, over the cemetery south of the village of Markgrafen. Scatters the light, white sand wherever it goes and blows.

Local teacher Schiemann throws the three handfuls of earth over the coffin. All that didn't have to be.

One will also forget it quickly.

What will then be left of Boehlendorff?

There is the now famous letter from Master Hölderlin, 1802, addressed to Boehlendorff:... as ascribed to the heroes...touched by Apollo I...

Someone compiles a book of Baltic poets, in it he sets Boehlendorff alongside the notoriously unhappy Lenz, we could have done that too. Editor Hensler says you see, times have changed: Boehlendorff, spelling usually differing... Shattered in soul and body, the lamentable one evoked Goethe-like harmonies from his lyre.

But how hard the sky is on that day. Harder than the waters of the bay. Darker than the waters of the Angern. A light behind the sky which it still holds firm, forcing it back.

There is something in the air like crunching.

Will they erect a stone for him? And who should do it? Questions.

And what will be said about him in Livonia?

What does local teacher Schiemann say? Or Fräulein von Zandikov? Who go back to the estate on foot.

And what are we going to do? Do we erect a monument? A column? Have that sentence hammered into the stone: moral being and be created and must?

Good person, that Herr Hofmeister.

That's what the people who are standing round the grave say. They all look upwards.

The gleam of light has hurled itself up over the gloomy sky, it stands high aloft, and begins to plunge, now to sink, and to spread out from above over the whole gloominess, over the hard sky, where the storm springs up and guides the crunching along from the bay inland, over Galtern, Strasden, Rittelsdorf, Walgalen, Birsch, over the valley, dropping deeper around the gorse, but then out to the bay again, a white road stretching itself far out over the water.

And the people scurry back to the village.

Good person. What else?

Surely that is something already and surely it is unnecessary to know more about Boehlendorff.