Lobelia in other words.
No, not at all Lobelia.
But yes it is.
But no it isn't.

Here you've got to explain that Lobelia is a village, somewhat stretched out, along a much traveled highway, and Lobelian Grove a public house, a beer garden, an establishment and as befits, sufficiently removed from Lobelia. Whoever has a horse in Lobelia, rides to Lobelian Grove in a carriage. And does not take the others along, the other Lobelianers, who have no horse. At the outside Mr. Tesche, the customs functionary, frontier guard, customs official, customs squadron sergeant major or whatever it's called. As is customary here. You also buy him beer and for Lene, that's

Tesche's wife, a lemonade, in Lobelian Grove.

That's certainly enough then, and it's beautiful here on a Sunday. Innkeeper Ambrassat lays the table cloths outside and has to shout Marie six times in a row before his wife joins him and straightens out the garden chairs.

There are in fact already people there, plumber Borbe with his wife, the midwife, and Kakschies from the ferry and farmer Bussat with his brother, called Mr. Bussat, and not without the woman of the family, as usual.

It's lovely here in the woods. Ambrassat gets out the gramophone and winds it up and sticks the crank back in his pocket. Now the music roars into action, Lützow's Wild, Daring Hunt, performed by the Berlin Teachers' Glee Club in disquieting fashion. The deep voices, that gurgle around way down there and all of a sudden become velvet smooth because it's going up higher, you can keep up with them all right, but those tenors, how do those guys do it, so far up there, well I just don't know.

And altogether this gramophone.

Ambrassat's father-in-law, the late teacher Fett, brought it along with him in the year 'ninety-three from the Chicago World Fair. He went over there you see, across the Atlantic, and actually came back. Then he had something to talk about for the remaining thirty years.

Ambrassat keeps it in good shape with oil, everyone except him mucks himself up when he touches it, Ambrassat services it all by himself too. Promised the ol' father-in-law with a handshake as he was drawing up his testament. But it certainly pays, doesn't it?

It would be even better if the records played longer, but the machine is not so particularly big, maybe it wouldn't manage it. But anyhow, a good strong case of wood, glasspanes are fitted into the sides, there you see the flappisms, as Ambrassat says. It goes nice and steady and slow, the speed comes through the transmission, says Ambrassat. On one of the records the well-known Caruso sings some African piece or other by Meyerbeer. And the tone comes out of the green tin horn, which rises magnificently above the case. You could watch for hours at a time how all that works.

And when you've gone some way down the clearing in the woods and can see the river, the Szeszupe, which as is well known doesn't join with the Memel until after Lenkeningken and certainly not at Lobelia, you have the music very pleasantly at your back: The Linden Tree or O Valleys far, O heights.

And there you think this country here is a country like music. The clearing opens up more and more broadly, the woods end with a young growth of birch, another couple of bushes, then the meadows begin and dip slowly, catlike softly down on to the sand bank. Even without the music, which you don't properly hear anymore, and which probably has also stopped.

Not even the shouting with which the Krauledat kids start up the swing reaches down to here, the big box, hung up with poles on two pines, in which four grown-ups can

just as easily sit down. Or six kids.

There's plenty to tell about, and little to talk about, down here by the water. The perch leap a bit after the flies and the green gnats, the other fish too ascend from the dusk below, but hardly move, motionless, letting

the sun shine upon their dark backs.

Sunday is called Sunday because the sun shines. It's so good here that nothing more reasonable occurs to you. So you can go again. Take your place by the horses, flick away the black flies from their eyes and the metal-hard strident horseflies from their flanks. A pursuit that has its reward in heaven, here on earth it's useless, there's too much of the stuff.

Music and the swing and big coffee pots, white and enameled, and griddle cakes, and

slowly but surely Sunday evening is coming up. And the Tesches aren't there today, there's a christening at the Tesches'.

And the Ambrassats didn't know that. You

don't say, Mr. Bussat!

Heinrich, who's actually named Franz Kirschnick, is standing by the horses. Gonna throw your money about again today, farmer Bussat queries.

Heinrich trades in cattle, he's stupid and has money, so he can afford to lose a bit, he

lives mighty fine as a bachelor.

Are you kidding, your nags, says Heinrich,

you can keep 'em.

That's something different about Heinrich, he doesn't always think right away about buying. Where there's cattle he just steps up, like all Kirschnicks, everyone knows that, they've got it from their grandfather Heinrich, that's why they're all named after him.

So you don't want to?

We can talk it over, says Heinrich.

And now the first people are leaving, the Bussats and the Borbes. Old man Kakschies sticks around. Dentist Willmann's wife wants to go home, but her spouse doesn't, no, not he. Mr. Bussat is still talking with forester Krauledat, who's already packed wife and kids into his car. So Mr. Bussat is staying, and Krauledat leaves.

And Tesche comes, now, in the evening and by bike, on official business, today on Sunday. Is the christening perhaps over? No, not that, rather: Duty is duty.

That's what people say. But they also say right afterwards: And schnapps is schnapps. And that's true. The last word is then: When

he's right he's right.

So it's schnapps, but a special kind. Some say alcohol, meaning all kinds of schnapps, but we'd do better to call it meths. You usually buy a quart bottle in the week, and fill up with water. But here it's served to you. And the something special consists in the fact that the schnapps iridesces in seven colors. That means you've got to count, and you can easily miscount, and you've got to sharpen up your old wits, and so moisten them, from inside. And whoever manages that and can also tell you the colors, he's well oiled and the evening will be a long one; the Ambrassat woman should have gone to bed long ago.

Just beat it, says Kakschies, and to Ambrassat: Your old woman is a low-down fleecer. He shoves the glass over, and Ambrassat makes up for it by filling up past the measuring line.

And dentist Willmann has departed, singing. His wife sings with him so it won't sound

so boozy.

And Heinrich has to keep going behind the house. Weak bladder.

The Emperor, says Bussat, didn't have to at all. He sat and sat, the Honorable District President said so. The gentlemen of the Uhlan Guards provided suitable pots under the table. Couldn't get up as long as the Emperor sat and sat there.

Bussat pours down his glass elegantly

making a right angle of his arm.

Popular anecdotes.

Tesche gets up and goes back of the house.

Wait a minute, he says to Heinrich, whom he meets at the corner of the house, and Heinrich stops and buttons himself up clumsily and waits. There goes the moonlight over the woods, all yellow.

And Tesche comes along the wall and says, behind Heinrich's back: You're gonna pay

me.

Heinrich says: Then it'll leak out.

Nothing'll leak out, says Tesche, you pay all at once.

How much?

Eight hundred.

Are you nuts? And where from?

You've come from Wallenthal, you've got cash.

And because Heinrich remains silent: Come on, then half. For a starter.

Let's go in now, says Heinrich.

We'll talk later, says Tesche.

They sit there for a while in the tap room. Then Kakschies says: Let's pack up and go.

So there they go.

Six men walking through the woods.

And four go home. Three to Lobelia to the village. Kakschies down to the little ferryhouse. Before Lobelia the road turns off towards the Szeszupe. And two stay in the woods. Tesche has got his quart portion and that will be tipped back. And not while standing either.

And amid a hodge-podge of talk, a wearisome back-and-forth about money, eight hundred and in two halves, and: Come

on, fork it over, you've got it.

Certainly, he's got. Heinrich has money, and the kid at Tesche's is also his.

Tired I am, says Tesche.

Want to sleep, adds Heinrich.

Sinks back and is already asleep.

And Tesche sits a while. The moon has taken off.

Now the bottle is empty and flies into the bushes.

Well good.

Short nights, in the summer.

Heinrich wakes up. Something moist moves over his face at short intervals. How come? The thoughts don't make the connections, in all the schnapps, swim around there. And he's not afraid either, not even startled, being way down deep in the schnapps, like in a blanket, in the sevencolored schnapps.

Methinks there's somebody licking me.

Now he's got his eyes open.

And there stands a stag astride him, and it still keeps on passing its rough tongue over Heinrich's face.

That's not so unpleasant, just that it tickles, and Heinrich's got to laugh, and then it's the stag that takes fright and flight, not very hot-footed, into the bushes.

In the half-light Heinrich recognizes, while he's straightening up, that it is a white stag.

Tesche lies beside him and grunts as Heinrich nudges him.

Yeah sure, says Tesche, there's always one like that.

Heinrich told him that somebody licked him.

But you've no idea who it was, says Heinrich, and now he's almost worked up about it.

Go shovel it somewhere else. White stag.

At the same time Tesche himself knows: These white stags do exist, over in the Trappön Forest, they're gray, somewhat darker than Iceland moss.

That brings, who knows, luck? Heinrich can't calm himself down at all. He gets up

and stretches and begins to whistle, but that hurts his head a bit, so he stops right away.

And Tesche's understood one word, that's

luck.

So how'd it be with four hundred, he says.

O.K., says Heinrich and sits down beside him. But receipt.

Naturally, among us men, says Tesche.

Heinrich counts off four bills and puts back the rest in his wallet.

At least another ten rags, goes through Tesche's head. The thought alone hurts, after so much schnapps you don't even have to whistle.

And I've left my bike standing, in Lobelian Grove, says Tesche.

It won't walk off, says Heinrich.

And now the story can easily be ended.

Tesche's kid grows up as Tesche's kid, no talk of Heinrich. It's called Martha and has, as a child, blond hair, later it turns dark.

Heinrich wasn't seen again. Yeah we were all there together, says Bussat, in Lobelian Grove. He just wanted to pop over towards Kloken, says Tesche. He probably drowned in the drink, says Kakschies. Well who knows, says Ambrassat, there's all sorts of riffraff knocking about, here on the border.

You can't say what last thoughts are like.

Quite different from case to case.

Last words — that's a different story, they're sometimes bandied about, something's heard, they make the rounds, sometimes, for a long time afterwards.

Not these.

Now what could he have said?

You know: real funny, it stands there over you, and such a tongue, I tell you, a white stag, downright hysterical.

Yeah sure, says Tesche.

And Heinrich wants to sit up: Tesche, leave off, cut it out, Tesche.

And that's all there is to tell. You ride to Lobelian Grove, talk about this and that. Ambrassat's gramophone. Ambrassat's swing. Ambrassat's seven-colored schnapps. Here it's so lovely in the woods. You guys drink like sewers, says the Bussat woman. I tell you, says Mr. Bussat, the Emperor—that guy sat and sat.