

Suddenly I brought myself up short, all the while as I rambled on, Durchlauscht sat, with an inscrutable look upon his face. I stammered, "Pardon; my mouth seems to have gotten the better of me, I hope I haven't offended you?"

"No" he said, "you did not - I have just been thinking about your claim, concerning persons not knowing their own cigars when they are outside of the box." Looking slightly embarrassed he turned away and continued, "I would be very interested in taking up that challenge myself."

At this my heart leapt in my chest, for it was the very thing I had hoped for, the reason I desired this interview. I ventured, "Durchlauscht are you tempting me?"

He smiled and then tapped out his pipe. I stood up and fetched from its hiding place my polished mahogany box, the one I never leave home without, sitting it before Satan unopened I asked, "I believe there is a customary wager you make with the unfortunates you come across – concerning their souls?"

His eyes suddenly flared and then he smiled and said, "Who's tempting whom?"

I opened the box allowing him to view its contents, row upon row of identical unmarked cigars, he chose one and placing it in his mouth I lit the end and we spent the next hour in silent contemplation. Finally he offered, "Good of you not to require me to tell you where they were made. By the way - will it be riches, power or glory if you win?"

"None of those Durchlauscht for I have seen what they have done to other men, no, I want only this – that all of my greatest works are published in my lifetime."

Nodding his head solemnly he answered, "Done," And we smoked on in silence.