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TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

BUDDENBROOKS WAS WRITTEN before the turn of the century; it was first published in 1902, and became a German classic. It is one of those novels - we possess many of them in English - which are at once a work of art and the unique record of a period and a district. *Buddenbrooks* is great in its psychology, great as the monument of a vanished cultural tradition, and ultimately great by the perfection of its art: the classic purity and beautiful austerity of its style.

The translation of a book which is a triumph of style in its own language, is always a piece of effrontery. *Buddenbrooks* is so leisurely, so chiselled: the great gulf of the war divides its literary method from that of our time. Besides, the author has recorded much dialect. This difficulty is insuperable. Dialect cannot be transferred.

So the present translation is offered with humility. It was necessary to recognize that the difficulties were great. Yet it was necessary to set oneself the bold task of transferring the spirit first and the letter so far as might be; and above all, to make certain that the work of art, coming as it does to the ear, in German, like music out of the past, should, in English, at least *not* come like a translation - which is, " God bless us, a thing of naught."

Reference: « Translator's Note », in Thomas Mann, *Buddenbrooks* [c1902], transl. by Helen Tracy Lowe-Porter [c1924], and *Lübeck as a Way of Life and Thought*, transl. by Richard and Clara Winston, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, p. xxv.