

Heinrich von Kleist, *Anekdote aus dem letzten preußischen Kriege* (1810)

Abstract

Heinrich von Kleist (1777-1811) was born into a noble family in Frankfurt/Oder in the Margraviate of Brandenburg. After serving in the Prussian army, he briefly studied law and sciences and later obtained a post in the Ministry of Finance in Berlin. Driven by restlessness, Kleist spent several years traveling to Switzerland, France, Bohemia, and Saxony before settling in Berlin again. In 1811, he and his terminally ill friend Henriette Vogel died by suicide. Throughout his short life, Kleist remained an outsider in Germany's literary life whose works only received critical recognition after his death. Among his best-known works are the dramas *Das Käthchen von Heilbronn*, *Der zerbrochene Krug*, *Amphitryon* and *Penthesilea*, and the novellas *Michael Kohlhaas* and *The Marquise of O*.

Heinrich von Kleist's *Anekdote aus dem letzten preußischen Kriege* [Anecdote from the Last Prussian War] reflects on the Prussian defeat against Napoleon at the Battle of Jena and Auerstedt (1806). The piece praises the bravery of a Prussian horseman, who, although cut off from his own troops, calmly paused and drank schnapps, smoked a pipe and finally, when he was attacked by three Frenchmen, cut them down and hijacked their horses. The text first appeared in the October 6, 1810, issue of the daily newspaper *Berliner Abendblätter* published by Kleist. Kleist's opposition to Napoleon's expansionist rule and his praise of Prussian virtues led to a revival of his works in the second half of the nineteenth century, when the nationalist movement claimed him as one of its leading literary figures.

Source

Source: Heinrich von Kleist, *Anekdote aus dem letzten preussischen Kriege*. Originally published: *Berliner Abendblätter*, vol. 1. (1910), page 6, Librivox Sammlung Deutscher Prosa, volume 9, read by Christian Al-Kadi, cataloged in 2009, available online from Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:LibriVox_-_Kleist_Anekdote_aus_dem_letzten_preussischen_Kriege.ogg

Recommended Citation: Heinrich von Kleist, *Anekdote aus dem letzten preußischen Kriege* (1810), published in: German History in Documents and Images, <<https://germanhistorydocs.org/en/the-holy-roman-empire-1648-1815/ghdi:audio-5043>> [July 14, 2025].