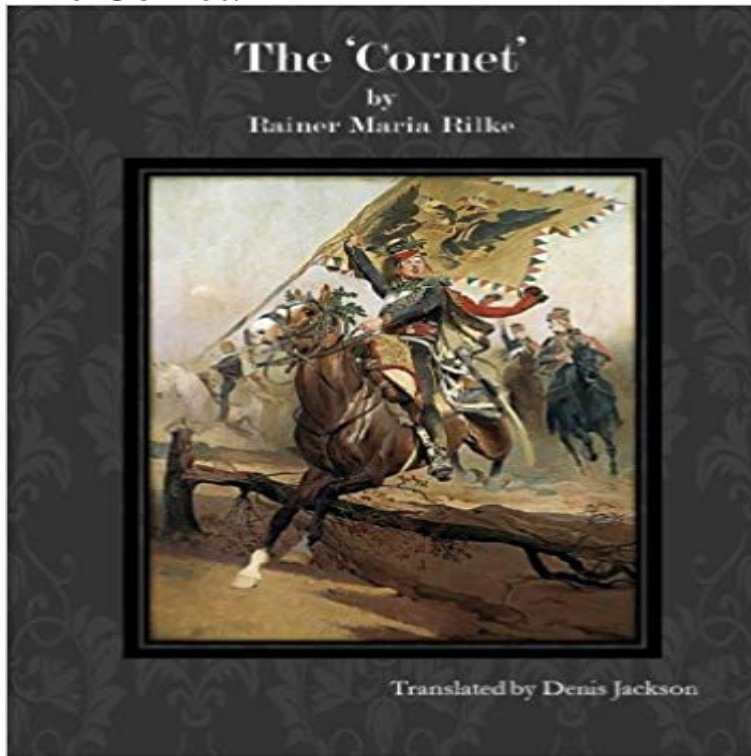


The Cornet.



Rainer Maria Rilke's narrative prose poem *The Cornet* (in the original German: *Die Weise von Liebe und Tod des Cornets Christoph Rilke*, 1899), dramatically relates a young Austrian cavalry officer's journey and experiences to join his cavalry regiment, as its standard-bearer, in northern Hungary to fight the Turks at the decisive battle of Mogensdorf in 1664. Each detail of the officer's journey is artistically and strikingly captured, vignette by vignette: the hot dusty plains of Hungary, the bivouac-fire, the baggage-train and its rowdy followers, the Austrian standard he finally bears into battle and of the beautiful unknown woman with whom he spends his last night. Even the burning castle from which he barely manages to escape at the onset of the battle is depicted in a stylized and highly aesthetic form. In the end, the Cornet can no longer be distinguished from the burning standard he is carrying, which acts as a beacon for his fellow-soldiers. The last images before his eyes are of the rich clothing and jewels he has seen in the castle, as the colour of flame seems to merge with the gold of precious metals. He dies beneath his burning standard with a vision of a many-coloured splendour before him. (Metzger, E. *A Companion to the Works of Rainer Maria Rilke* (2001), pp.81-2. The poem is frequently described as Rilke's first hymn of praise to those who die young. *The Cornet*, following its publication in 1912, immediately sold over one million copies and remains popular in its original German and in translation to this day. It set Rainer Maria Rilke (1875-1926) on the path to being one of the finest poets and writers of his age; a reputation that was continually enhanced by his much later poetic works. Public readings of *The Cornet* are given even today in many cities throughout Europe. The current publication of this work includes not only a new translation from the German of Rilke's prose poem, but also for the first time

among previous translations, a detailed Introduction to the work, an account and map of the historical battle, translators notes and references to the texts, a chronology of the authors life and work, and a selected bibliography for further reading and research. The original German text is included. The translator was awarded the Oxford University Weidenfeld Translation Prize (2005) for his translation of works by the North Frisian writer Theodor Storm (1817-1888).

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