Summary

"The German language has two words for courageous, tapfer and mutig." (Paul Tillich)

Notes

See the end of the work for notes.

The books felt rough under his fingertips, dust dancing where he brushed over them. „Do you know if he read all of these?“, he asked no one and the skull in particular.

At the beginning he had been browsing the volumes, shuffling the papers. A bent corner was a landmark, every coffee stain a treasure chest, the underlinings a cipher to be decoded. The spine of Grimm´s Fairy Tales broke long ago.

He caressed the split frames of the older volumes. A splinter lodged in his finger and he waited for the blood to come, painting a line on the back of his hand, over his arm to the scar above his heart. But there wasn´t any blood, just a small pressure on the nerves, barely noticeable. His fingertips felt as if they belonged to someone else and again they were reaching out towards the sky, touching the ground, tracing the silent blue line on the white skin.

„John, dear, what...“ The loud crash let his eyes snap open. Books were still sliding, crashing down on the ground, falling, flying, cracking open, the paper inside fluttering.

Mrs Hudson stopped at the threshold. She reclined into the doorframe, her eyes fixed on the skull. „I´ll put on the kettle. You come down, when you are finished here?“

John nodded and bent to the ground. A couple of german word caught his eyes: Their first case,
Anderson babbling, „Rache, it’s a German word“, Sherlock scolding him and being right about it. The page began in the middle of a sentence:

„A nobleman. He has what was called hohe Mut, the high, noble and courageous spirit. The German language has two words for courageous, tapfer and mutig. Mut is a matter of the „heart“. While Mut has preserved this larger sense, Tapferkeit became more and more the special virtue of the soldier - who ceased to be identical with the knight and the nobleman. “

„Tapfer“, what a strange word. He wondered how to pronounce it and had already turned his head to ask. A sad smirk formed at the corners of his mouth. Yeah, to be „tapfer“ was to be expected from him, wasn’t it? His fingers turned the book and he snorted at the title: „The Courage To Be“.

John jumped up, still gripping the well-read volume, and bashed it against the smile on the wall. „Courage to be, my ass!“

After a (suprisingly) nice afternoon with Mrs Hudson, after he had passed Speedy’s and just wanted to catch the tube, he kneeled in front of the couch and pocketed the book.

End Notes

As mid0nz pointed out on tumblr, "The Courage To Be" is on Sherlock’s bookshelf - I was intrigued as it is a theological classic (so why would Sherlock have it?) and one of my favourite reads.

The quote can be found in: Paul Tillich, The Courage To Be, Yale: 2000, p. 6.

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