

THE CULTURAL LEVEL OF MIDDLE-CLASS-EVERYDAY
LIFE IN THE TOWN OF LAUN BEFORE THE BATTLE OF
THE WHITE MOUNTAIN

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This contribution, as a part of the history of everyday life, focuses on the cultural aspect of life in a Bohemian town in the period which ended with the Battle of the White Mountain. Laun (Louny) was chosen, apart from its indisputable political significance in the period examined, because it furnishes an exceptionally broad spectrum of documentary evidence. Relying mainly on inventories of bequests, the author concentrates on libraries as one of the most important factors shaping the mentality of the middle-class society of the period. Analysis of qualitative as well as quantitative factors points to a prevalence of libraries with rather small or at least not exceptionally big holdings, a fact which had been presumed from the outset, and to a great variety of religious as well as non-religious literature being read. This includes Lutheran literature, which was, surprisingly enough for a Czech-speaking town, often read in the original rather than a Czech translation. Other factors of cultural life in the town, which exercised an influence on the mental disposition of its inhabitants, such as the educational system or the activities of learned societies, have not been neglected. Finally, by means of examining tax records and registries, the entire cultural life of the town has been correlated to the social and economic conditions, the result being that the latter did not play a decisive part when it came to acquiring books for a library of not-more-than-average size (and, as we have seen, most libraries belonged in this category).