In God's Way: A Novel

by Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson

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Heinemann's International Library.

EDITOR'S NOTE.

There is nothing in which the Anglo-Saxon world differs more from the world of the Continent of Europe than in its fiction. English readers are accustomed to satisfy their curiosity with English novels, and it is rarely indeed that we turn aside to learn something of the interior life of those other countries the exterior scenery of which is often so familiar to us. We climb the Alps, but are content to know nothing of the pastoral romances of Switzerland. We steam in and out of the picturesque fjords of Norway, but never guess what deep speculation into life and morals is made by the novelists of that sparsely peopled but richly endowed nation. We stroll across the courts of the Alhambra, we are listlessly rowed upon Venetian canals and Lombard lakes, we hasten by night through the roaring factories of Belgium; but we never pause to inquire whether there is now flourishing a Spanish, an Italian, a Flemish school of fiction. Of Russian novels we have lately been taught to become partly aware, but we do not ask ourselves whether Poland may not possess a Dostoieffsky and Portugal a Tolstoi.

Yet, as a matter of fact, there is no European country that has not, within the last half-century, felt the dew of revival on the threshing-floor of its worn-out schools of romance. Everywhere there has been shown by young men, endowed with a talent for narrative, a vigorous determination to devote themselves to a vivid and sympathetic interpretation of nature and of man. In almost every language, too, this movement has tended to display itself more and more in the direction of what is reported and less of what is created. Fancy has seemed to these young novelists a poorer thing than observation; the world of dreams fainter than the world of men. They have not been occupied mainly with what might be or what should be, but with what is, and, in spite of all their shortcomings, they have combined to produce a series of pictures of existing society in each of their several countries such as cannot fail to form an archive of documents invaluable to futurity.

But to us they should be still more valuable. To travel in a foreign country is but to touch its surface. Under the guidance of a novelist of genius we penetrate to the

secrets of a nation, and talk the very language of its citizens. We may go to Normandy summer after summer and know less of the manner of life that proceeds under those gnarled orchards of apple-blossom than we learn from one tale of Guy de Maupassant's. The present series is intended to be a guide to the inner geography of Europe. It presents to our readers a series of spiritual Baedekers and Murrays. It will endeavour to keep pace with every truly characteristic and vigorous expression of the novelist's art in each of the principal European countries, presenting what is quite new if it is also good, side by side with what is old, if it has not hitherto been presented to our public. That will be selected which gives with most freshness and variety the different aspects of continental feeling, the only limits of selection being that a book shall be, on the one hand, amusing, and, on the other, wholesome.

One difficulty which must be frankly faced is that of subject. Life is now treated in fiction by every race but our own with singular candour. The novelists of the Lutheran North are not more fully emancipated from prejudice in this respect than the novelists of the Catholic South. Everywhere in Europe a novel is looked upon now as an impersonal work, from which the writer, as a mere observer, stands aloof, neither blaming nor applauding. Continental fiction has learned to exclude, in the main, from among the subjects of its attention, all but those facts which are of common experience, and thus the novelists have determined to disdain nothing and to repudiate nothing which is common to humanity; much is freely discussed, even in the novels of Holland and of Denmark, which our race is apt to treat with a much more gingerly discretion. It is not difficult, however, we believe--it is certainly not impossible--to discard all which may justly give offence, and yet to offer to an English public as many of the masterpieces of European fiction as we can ever hope to see included in this library. It will be the endeavour of the editor to search on all hands and in all languages for such books as combine the greatest literary value with the most curious and amusing qualities of manner and matter.

EDMUND GOSSE.

IN GOD'S WAY

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IN GOD'S WAY

A NOVEL

BY

BJÖRNSTJERNE BJÖRNSON

TRANSLATED FROM THE NORWEGIAN

BY

ELIZABETH CARMICHAEL

LONDON WILLIAM HEINEMANN 1890

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TO MY BEST FRIEND ETATSRÅD FREDERIK HEGEL IN REMEMBRANCE

Thou never hast been here; yet I roam Often up and down and meet thee everywhere. Here is no room, nor road But thoughts of thee stand forth Awaiting me from by-gone days, When thou by deeds of faithful friendship Brought comfort to my home in all its troubles.

And ofttimes as I wrote this book, Thy kindly eye would beam on me; We were alone then, thou and I, and All that silently grew into words-- Here and there the book must needs Be like thy heart, thy simple faith, And therefore may thy name impart a blessing unto it.

Aulestad, September 11, 1889.

INTRODUCTION.

Among many Scandinavian candidates for fame in the province of fiction, by far the most distinguished in our own day is the Norwegian, Björnstjerne Björnson. He is a child of the mountains; it was in the remote and romantic parish of Kvike, of which his father was priest, that he was born on the 8th of December, 1832. In the bleak parsonage high up in a ravine of the hills, the child led the solitary life which he has described in the little story called Blakken. When he was six years old, his father was transferred to Næsset, in the Romsdal, one of the loveliest parishes in Norway, where the influences of natural beauty and a full peasant society instantly began to mould the child's poetic sensations. At the grammar school of Molde, Björnson was an active, tiresome, and industrious boy; in whom, at about the age of fifteen, a feeling for literature was suddenly awakened, by the reading of Wergeland's poem, The English Pilot. At seventeen, he was sent to a high school at Christiania, and in 1852 he entered the university. At the age of twenty he began to write dramas in verse, none of which have seen the light, and a little later he began to live by journalism in the capital. His early career was one of struggle against privation and disappointment. It was not until 1857 that Björnson made his literary debut, with a little historic drama, called Between the Battles, and with a novel, Synnöve Solbakken, of unprecedented charm and freshness, an exceedingly naïve study of peasant life in Norway; of this four or five separate translations exist in the English language. He was now suddenly famous, and the great success of this book led the author to write a similar, but perhaps a stronger novel, Arne, in 1858. Of this also many versions have been made. In 1860 followed Short Stories, a volume including six tales, one of which, "A Happy Boy," has been regarded as Björnson's most successful effort in this line of peasant-romance. He proceeded to concentrate his

attention on a revival of the poetical drama, and wrote a succession of masterly tragedies and a good comedy. His next novel, The Fisher Maiden, did not appear until 1868.

Absorbed in dramatic work of various kinds, a short story called The Bridal March, 1873, was Bjornson's only contribution to fiction for several years. When he reappeared as a novelist, a great change in his manner was discernible. In Magnhild, published in 1877, his exquisite purity and simplicity of style had disappeared; this book was more real, perhaps, but it was much more turbid and more speculative than his early mountain romances. Björnson had been touched by the "novel of experience," and had been troubled by it. Captain Mansana, a story of the Italian war, was slight in character. Everything seemed to point to the abandonment of prose fiction by Björnson, in favour of the drama, in which he had made and was still making a series of paradoxical successes. Quite in recent years, however, Björnson has returned to the novel, and has produced several works of extraordinary merit. Among these, the latest, In God's Way, which was originally published in 1889, has been universally received as the most remarkable. It is a book which combines the romantic colour and ideal glow of the author's early pastoral stories, with a deeper insight into life and a graver examination of the relations of impulse to duty.

Björnson is a Radical in almost every department of thought. Within the last ten years he has been drawn more and more closely into the vortex of political life. From his farm at Aulestad, in the mountains, he sent forth in 1877, a drama, The King, the consequences of which were such as he probably never anticipated. The piece, which was far from being one of his most artistic creations, was looked upon as a manifestation of enmity to the throne, and since that time the poet has been driven further and further into opposition to the existing Sovereign of Sweden and Norway. But, fortunately for literature, no revolution has as yet given him that opportunity which so many advanced Norwegians yet hope may be placed in his

way, of helping to administer the government of his country upon a Republican basis. He is probably able to do better service to Norway by writing those pure and manly stories of his, which thousands of young people read with enthusiasm, than if he were entrusted with the responsibilities of a portfolio. But it would be idle to speculate what triumphs, whether literary, social, or political, the future may not hold for one whose physical and intellectual health is superb, and who has not yet approached his sixtieth year.

EDMUND GOSSE.

SCHOOL-DAYS

IN GOD'S WAY

I.

In the melting snow on the hill-side by the sea, in the last rays of the evening sun, stood a boy of fourteen, awestruck. He looked toward the west, out across the sea; he looked toward the east, over town and shore and the broad hills; in the background still higher peaks rose far away in the clear sky.

The storm had lasted a long time; it had been more terrible, too, than any the old people could remember. In spite of the new dyke, many ships had been driven ashore, and many had sunk. The telegraph brought news of wrecks all along the coast, and close by here the herring-nets had been broken and washed away, oars and anchors had disappeared; it was even feared that the worst was not yet known.

It was but a few hours since a calm had set in, the storm had abated, the gusts of wind ceased, all was over--all except the last low grumblings of the storm.

But the sea was rebellious; it does not do to stir up the deep and then to run away. Far off in the distance great sea-waves, higher than houses, came rolling up in

endless lines with foam-white crests and a crashing fall; the dull, heavy thud was heard across the town and shore; it was like a piece of land slipping away down into space.

Each time the waves at full height stormed the mountain, the spray was dashed up to a monstrous height; from afar it seemed as though the great white sea-monsters of the old legends were trying to land just at that very spot. But a few salt splashes were all that reached the top; they stung the boy's cheek as he stood there motionless.

As a rule it was only the very worst westerly storms that could dash the spray so high; but now it had reached the top though the air was so calm. No one but he had ever seen such a sight.

Away in the far west, sky and sea seemed melting into one in the glow of the setting sun. It was like some golden realm of peace; and all the deep sea-waves, with their white crests rolling up from as far as the eye could reach, were like banished rebels; they came crowding onward, protesting, million-mouthed.

The contrast of colouring was now at its height; no more blending of lights and shades, not even a red shimmer made its way across. There was a rich, warm glow, here a cold, blue-black lay over the sea and snowy coast; all that could be seen of the town from the hill-side dwindled away and seemed to grow less and less every time the boy turned to look inland. But each time he looked he felt himself grow more restless and uneasy; surely that was a bad sign; could more be going to happen? His imagination was startled, and, tired as he was from want of sleep, he had no strength to fight against this fear.

The splendour of the sky was disappearing, all the colour gradually fading away. The roar from down below, where the sea-monsters were trying to climb, grew louder and louder; or was it he who heard it more plainly?

Was this meant for him? What in the world had he been doing? Or was he going to

do something wrong? Once before the same vague fear had proved to be a bad omen.

It was not the storm alone that had frightened him; a short time ago a lay preacher had prophesied that the end of the world was at hand; all the signs of the Bible had come to pass, and the prophecies of Jeremiah and Daniel were clearly to be understood. It made such a sensation that the papers took up the matter and announced that the same thing had been foretold so very often before, and those prophecies of Jeremiah and Daniel were always suited to the occasion. But when the hurricane came, and was fiercer and more terrible than any that could be remembered; when ships loosed from their moorings were driven up against the wharf, crushed themselves and crushing others, and especially when night came on and shrouded everything in darkness, and no lantern even could keep alight, ... the crashing fall of the waves was heard but not seen, shouts of command, screamings and great lamentations; and in the streets such terror, roofs were lifted right off, houses shook, windows rattled, stones hurled about, and the distant screams of those trying to escape only added to the fright, ... then, indeed, were many who remembered the words of the preacher; God help and save us, surely the last day has come and the stars are about to fall. The children especially were frightened to death. The parents had not time to stay with them; though the last day of the world had come, still there was a doubt as to whether it really were the last day, and from sheer force of habit it was thought wiser to look well after all worldly goods, so they saved what they could, and put up bolts and bars, and ran to look to the fires, and were busy everywhere. But to the children they gave prayer-books and psalm-books, and told them to read what was written about earthquakes and other plagues, and about the day of judgment; hurriedly they found the places for them, and then ran and left them. As if the children could read then!

Some there were who went to bed and pulled the bedclothes over their heads; some took their dog or cat with them--it was company for them, and they would die

together. But it happened sometimes that neither dog nor cat chose to die under the bedclothes, so then there was a fight.

The boy who now stood up on the top of the hill had been absolutely crazy with fear. But he was one of those whom fright drove about from place to place--out of the house into the street, from the street down to the harbour, and then back home again. No less than three times had his father been after him, caught him and locked him in, but he always managed to get out again. Now this was not the sort of thing that could have been done with impunity in an ordinary way, for no boy was kept more strictly or got such abundance of thrashings as Edward Kallem; but the one benefit the storm brought was that there were no blows that night.

The night passed away, and the stars still shone clear until day dawned once more, and the sun was as bright as ever; the storm died away and with it all remains of fear.

But once one has been influenced by anything so terrifying there will ever after be, as it were, a dread of the actual terror. Not only by night in evil dreams, but by day when one fancies one's self safest, it lurks in our imagination, ready to seize hold of us at the smallest provocation, and devouring us with cunning eyes and bated breath drives us sometimes to madness.

As the lad stood there he began to feel afraid of the deepening twilight and the roar of the sea; and all at once a terrible fear came upon him, and all the horrors of the last day began afresh. How could he have been so foolish as to venture up there, and alone, too! He stood like one paralysed, he dared not move one foot forward, it might be noticed, and he was surrounded by enemies. He whispered a prayer to his dead mother that if this really were the last day, and the resurrection set her free, she would come to him up there and stay with him; not with his sister, for she had the headmaster of the school to take care of her; but he was quite alone.

But all remained as before. Only toward the west it grew lighter, but darker toward

the east; the cold grew more intense and reigned supreme; but there was a comforting feeling in the more equal size and monotony of all around. By degrees he regained courage, and began to breathe more freely--timidly at first, then a long-drawn breath several times; he began then to touch himself all over very gently and cautiously, half afraid that those invisible powers which were looking out for him might suspect some evil. Softly he crept away from the edge of the precipice and drew nearer to the downward path. He was not going to run away, oh dear no! He was not even sure that he would go down; he might just try; certainly he would gladly come again. But the descent just here was dangerous, and really ought to be got over before dark, and at this time of year it got dark so very quickly. If he could manage to climb down to the path that led across the mountain from the fishing village down below, then there would be no danger; but up here--well, he would go carefully, cautiously, one little step forward, then another quite tiny little step. It was just a trial; he would be sure to come again.

No sooner had he in this way clambered down the steepest and most dangerous part of the descent, and stood where he felt himself protected from those invisible powers he had been so anxiously capitulating with, than he set to work to cheat them most thoroughly; down he fled, leaping and jumping, bounding like an India-rubber ball from one piece of rock to another, till suddenly he saw a pointed cap sticking up so far down below him that he could only just distinguish it. In an instant he came to a dead stop! His terror and flight, all he had just gone through vanished; not a shadow of it remained. Now it was his turn to frighten others; and here came the very boy he had been waiting for all the time. His excitement, his eyes, his whole eager attitude showed how he delighted in the knowledge that the other was coming within range. How he would give it him!

The other boy came climbing upward, little suspecting the danger that awaited him; slowly he jogged along as if enjoying his liberty and solitude: soon his heavy boots were heard with their iron heels clanking against the stones.

A well-built lad he was, tall and fair, a year or so older than the one awaiting him. He wore coarse cloth clothes, and a woollen scarf around his neck; his hands were encased in thick, knitted gloves; he carried one of the little wooden boxes generally used by the peasants; it was painted blue, with white and yellow roses.

A great mystery was now going to be revealed. For many days the whole school had been waiting, wondering with whom, and how and where this meeting would take place, and when the important moment would arrive when Ole Tuft, confronted by one of the school's most solemn police force would be obliged to confess where he went to, and what he did in the afternoons and evenings.

Ole Tuft was the son and only child of a well-to-do peasant along the coast. His father, who had been dead now a year, had been one of the most popular lay preachers in all the West country, and had early determined that his son should be a clergyman, that was why he went to the town-school. Ole was clever, industrious, and so respectful to the masters that he soon was a favourite with them all.

But no one can know a dog by his coat only. This most respectful and simple lad began to disappear from the playground in the afternoons; he was not at home (he lived with his aunt, his father's sister), and he was not at the Schultzes, where he used to help two of the children with their lessons--he always did that directly after dinner; neither was he at the head-master's, which was the same as being with the master's adopted daughter, Josephine Kallem, Edward's sister; Ole and she were always so much together. Sometimes the other lads would see him go in there, but never come out again, and yet they always found Josephine alone when they went in to look for him; for they posted out sentinels, and the whole search was carried on most methodically. They could track him as far as to the school-yard but no farther--surely he could not have disappeared into the earth? They ransacked the yard from one end to the other, every corner, every hiding-place was visited over and over again; Josephine herself went about with the boys and took them even up

to the cock-loft, down into the cellar, and into every room where none of the family were sitting, assuring them, on her word of honour, that he was not there; but they could look for themselves. Where in all the world was he then?

It so happened that the dux of the school had just won in a lottery "Les trois Mousquetaires," by Alexandre Dumas the elder, a splendid book, with illustrations; but as he soon discovered it was not the kind of book for so learned a man as he, he offered it as a reward to that one of his school-fellows who could find out where Ole Tuft went to, and what he did in the afternoons and evenings. This seemed a very enticing offer to Edward Kallem; he had always lived in Spain until about a year ago; he could read French just as well as Norwegian, and he had heard that "Les trois Mousquetaires" was the most splendid novel in the world. And now he stood sentinel for "Les trois Mousquetaires." Hurrah for all the three! now they would be his.

Down he crept softly, softly, until he reached the path; the culprit was close at hand.

There was something about Edward Kallem's head that made one think of a bird of prey. The nose was like a beak; the eyes wild looking, partly from their expression and partly because they had a slight squint. His forehead was sharp and short, the light brown hair closely cropped around it. There was an extraordinary mobility about him which made one feel that he was very agile. He was standing still, but he bent his body forward, shifted his feet and raised his arms as though the next moment he would throw himself into the air.

"Boo-oo!" shouted he with all the strength of his lungs. How he startled the boy who was climbing up--he nearly dropped his box. "Now I have got you! It's all up with your secret now!"

Ole Tuft was like one turned to stone.

"So there you are! Ha, ha! What have you got in the box?" And he rushed at him; but the other one quickly changed his box from right to left hand, and held it behind

him; it was impossible for Edward to get hold of it. "What are you thinking of lad? Do you fancy you can escape? Give up the box!"

"No, you shan't have it!"

"What! you won't obey? Then I'll just go down and ask."

"No; oh no!"

"Indeed but I will though."

"No, you won't?"

"Yes, I shall!" And he pushed past and tried to go down.

"I'll tell all, if only you'll not tell again."

"Not tell again? Are you out of your senses?"

"Oh, but you must not tell!"

"What a ridiculous idea! Give me the box or I'm away down to ask!" shouted he.

"Well, you'll not tell about it?" And Ole's eyes filled with tears.

"I won't promise."

"Don't tell, Edward!"

"I tell you I won't promise. Out with the box; look sharp!"

"Indeed it's nothing wrong. Do you hear, Edward?"

"Then if it's nothing wrong, I suppose you can give it me. Come, be quick!"

Boylike, Ole took this as a sort of half promise; he looked imploringly at him and began hesitatingly: "I go down there to--to--oh, you know--to walk in the ways of God." This last was said very timidly and he burst into tears.

"In the ways of God?" repeated Edward, half uneasily but highly astonished.

Then he remembered that once in a very drowsy geography class, the master had asked, "What are the best kind of roads or ways?" The answer in the lesson-book was, "The best way for the exportation of wares is by sea."

"Well," repeated the master, "what ways arc the best? Answer, you, Tuft!"

"The ways of God," answered Tuft. In an instant the whole class was wide awake, a roar of laughter gave evidence of it.

But for all that Edward Kallem did not really know the true meaning of "God's ways." Ole down in the fishing village, and walking in the ways of God! From sheer curiosity he forgot that he was a member of the moral police force, and blurted out, just like any other school-boy, "I don't understand what you mean, Ole; walking in the ways of God, did you say?"

Ole noticed the change at once; those wild-looking eyes were friendly again, but still had that strange light which indeed never left them. Edward Kallem was the one of all his school-fellows whom Ole secretly admired the most. The peasant boy suffered much from the town boys' superior brightness and sharpness, and both these qualities were very much to the fore in Edward Kallem. And besides, there was as it were a halo round his head--he was his brown-haired sister's brother.

He had one unbearable fault, he was a fearful tease. He often got a beating for it from the master or his father, or his companions, but a moment after he would begin again. This sort of courage was beyond the peasant boy's comprehension. Therefore a friendly word or smile from Edward had a greater effect than it was really worth; it had about it a sunny glow of gracious condescension. This coaxing, kindly questioning, coming from the bird of prey (though its beak only was visible), together with the bright, shining eyes, made Ole give in. As soon as Edward changed his tactics and asked innocently to be allowed to look at the box he gave it up, and felt so safe and at his ease that he dried his eyes with his big gloves, took off the one glove and blew his nose, then remembering that someone had given him a checked pocket-handkerchief for that purpose, he looked for it in his pockets but could not find it.

Edward had unfastened the lid of the box; before he raised it he looked up, saying,

"May I?"

"Yes, you may."

Edward put the lid on one side and took off a handkerchief, under which lay a large book; it was a Bible. He felt rather small, almost awed. Underneath the Bible lay several unbound books; he took up a few of them, turned them over and put them back again; they were religious tracts. He laid down the Bible again carefully, just as he had found it, spread the handkerchief over it, and shut the lid. In reality he was not a bit wiser than before, but he was more curious.

"You surely don't read the Bible to the people down there?" asked he.

Ole Tuft blushed. "Yes, I do, sometimes, and then----"

"Who do you read to?"

"Oh, to the sick, but it is not often I can get so far."

"Do you go and visit the sick?"

"Yes, it is just the sick I do visit."

"The sick? What can you do for them?"

"Oh, I help them as well as I can."

"You?" repeated Edward, with all the astonishment he was capable of. After a pause he went on. "But how do you help them? Do you take food to them?"

"Sometimes I do. I help them whenever they need it; I change the straw under them."

"Change the straw?"

"Why, yes, they lie upon straw, and then, don't you see, they would lie on there, no matter how dirty it got, for they are ill and cannot help themselves, and often in the daytime they are left quite alone when every one is out at work and the children are at school. So when I come in the afternoon, I go first to the boats just in from along the coast with straw, and there I buy what I need and carry it up and then take away

the old straw."

"But, my dear fellow, have you got money to buy it with?" asked Edward.

"My aunt collects money for me, and so does Josephine too."

"Josephine!" exclaimed the brother.

"Yes; oh, but perhaps I ought not to have told."

"Who does Josephine get money from?" asked Edward, with all an elder brother's aroused curiosity.

Ole bethought himself a moment, then answered decidedly and clearly: "From your father."

"From father?"

Edward knew quite well that even though it were Josephine who asked their father for money, he would never give it for any useless purpose; he always liked to know what it was wanted for. Therefore his father must approve of what Ole did, and that took away all doubt from Edward's mind. Ole could feel how entirely he changed his view of the matter; he could see it, too, in his eyes. He longed to tell him more about it all, and he did so. He explained how, often when he went there, there was hard work for him to do; he was obliged to light the fire and cook for them.

"Can you cook?"

"Of course I can, and clean up too, and buy all that is needed, and send a messenger rowing across to the apothecary; for the doctor may have written a prescription, but no one ever thinks of sending it over."

"And have you time to do all this?"

"Directly after dinner I finish work at the Schultzes, and I learn my own lessons at night."

And he talked on, telling all there was to tell, until he, too, remembered that they ought to get down from the mountain before dark.

Edward walked on in front, deep in thought; the other followed after with his box.

There, on the slope of the hill, they could hear the roaring of the waves as if in the air; it was like the low murmur of a distant crowd, but high above their heads. They felt it getting very cold; the moon was up, but no stars were to be seen; yes, one solitary one peeped forth.

"And what made you think of doing this?" asked Edward, turning round.

Ole stood still too. He moved his box backward and forward from one hand to the other; should he make a bold venture and tell all?

Edward understood at once that he had not heard everything, and that what remained to be told was the most important part of all.

"Can't you tell me?" he asked, as though it was quite immaterial.

"Yes, I think I can;" but he kept on changing his box from hand to hand without saying a word.

Then Edward became impatient and began trying to persuade him, to which Ole had no objections, but still he hesitated.

"Surely it is nothing wicked?"

"No, it is not wicked." And he added, after a pause, "It is rather something grand, very grand and great."

"Really something great?"

"In reality the grandest thing in all the world."

"But what can you mean?"

"Well, then, if only you will not tell, not to a living soul--do you hear?--I might tell you."

"What is it, Ole?"

"I am going to be a missionary."

"A missionary?"

"Yes, a missionary among the heathen, the regular savages, don't you know, those who eat people." He saw that Edward was almost speechless; so he made haste to tell him all sorts of things about cyclones, raging wild beasts, and poisonous snakes. "You see one requires to be prepared for such things."

"How prepared--for raging wild beasts and poisonous snakes?" Edward began to think everything possible.

"The people are the worst," said Ole, who had to give in about the wild beasts; "they are such dreadful heathens, and cruel and ugly and wicked into the bargain. So it will not be so easy to manage them. One must have practice."

"But how can you get practice in that sort of thing here? They are not heathens down in the fishing village?"

"No, but they can teach one how to bear a little of everything; there is no use complaining down there, but just be ready to do all sorts of hard work. They are often so suspicious when they are ill and fretful, and some of them are downright brutes. Just fancy, one evening one of them was going to hit me."

"Hit you?"

"I prayed to God that she would, but she only cursed and swore." Ole's eyes glistened, his whole face was beaming. "In one of the tracts I have in my box it says that that is the mistake of our missionaries, they go out to their work without having any practice or experience. And it says, too, that the art of winning people is a very difficult one, but hardest of all it is to win them for the kingdom of God, and that we ought to strive to do it from our childhood upward; that is what the book says, and I mean to do it. For to be a missionary is higher and greater than anything upon earth; greater than to be king, greater than to be emperor or pope. That is all in the tract, and this, too, that a missionary said: 'If I had ten lives, I would give them all to the mission.' And I mean to do the same."

They were walking side by side; unconsciously Ole had turned to the stars as they began to twinkle, and they both stood still awhile gazing into space. Beneath them lay the harbour with its dimly outlined ships, the silent, empty wharfs, and the scattered lights from the town; beyond was the shore, gray with snow and the dark sea-waves rolling up; they could hear the sound again, faintly in the distance, the monotony of the roar seemed in keeping with the star-spangled twilight. An invisible wave of sympathy passed between the lads, and seemed to link them together. There was no one Ole was so anxious should think well of him as his friend here with his jaunty fur cap; while Edward was thinking all the time how much better Ole was than he; for he knew quite well that he was far from good, and indeed he was told of it every day. He glanced sideways at the peasant boy. The peaked cap was pulled down over his ears, the big gloves, the thick scarf, the coarse cloth jacket, and trousers hanging loosely on him; the heavy, iron-bound boots--a curious figure--but his eyes alone made up for it all. And then the innocent, trusting expression, though it was rather an old-fashioned face.... Ole would decidedly be a great man some day.

They trotted on again, Edward in front, Ole after him, down toward the "hill-town," as that part was called which lay nearest the hill-side, and which consisted chiefly of workmen's houses, a few workshops, and some smaller factories. As yet the streets were neither properly paved nor lighted, and now the muddy snow was stiffening into ice as night came on. The lanterns, few and far between, hung in the middle of the streets, on ropes stretched across from opposite houses; they were made to be hoisted up and down. They had been badly cleaned and burned dimly. Here and there one of the small workshops had its own private lantern, which was hung up outside on the steps. Edward stopped again under one of these; he felt he must ask more questions. He wanted to know more particularly who it was Ole went to see among the fisher people--whether it was anyone they both knew.

Ole boldly put down his box on the steps, and stood there resting his hand on it; he

smiled. "Do you know Martha from the docks?" The whole town knew her; she was a clever woman, but much given to drink, and on Saturday evenings the school-boys always had great fun with her, when she stood leaning up against a wall, abusing them roundly with gestures not of the most refined, in fact, quite unmentionable. This, however, was just what the boys were waiting for, and was invariably received with shouts of delight.

"What! Dock Martha?" shrieked Edward. "Do you suppose you can convert her?"

"Hush! hush! For goodness' sake, not so loud," implored Ole, reddening and looking anxiously round.

Edward repeated, in a whisper: "Do you think anyone could ever convert Martha?"

"I believe I am on the high road to do so," whispered the other, mysteriously.

"Come, you won't get me to believe that," and he smiled with squinting eyes.

"Just you wait and hear. You know she fell on the ice this winter and was badly hurt?"

"Yes, I know that."

"Well, she is still laid up, and now everyone is tired of helping her, for she is so cross and so wicked. At first she was very disagreeable to me; I could hardly bear it; but I took no notice, and now it is nothing but, 'my little angel,' and 'my lamb,' and 'my pigeon,' and 'dear child;' for I have taken care of her, and got clothes and food for her, and bedclothes too, and have done much for her that was not at all pleasant; that I have. And yet it was she who wanted to beat me the other evening. I was going to help her up, and somehow she managed to hurt her bad foot. She shrieked with pain and lifted her stick, but then she thought better of it, and began to curse and abuse me dreadfully. Now we are good friends again, and the other day I ventured to read the Bible to her."

"What! to Martha?"

"Yes, the Sermon on the Mount, and she cried, lad."

"She cried? Then did she understand it?"

"No, for she cried so that she could not have heard much of it. But I don't think she cried on account of what was in the Bible, for she began as soon as ever I took it out."

The two boys stood looking at each other; a noise of hammering was heard over from the backyard, and in the far distance a steam-whistle; then the faint cry of a child from across the street.

"Did she say anything?"

"She said she felt much too miserable to listen to anything. So I explained that it was just the most wretched and miserable whom God wanted. But she seemed not to hear that at all. She only begged me to go away, and to go round and see if Lars the washerman had come home."

"Lars the washerman!" cried Edward so loud that again Ole had to check him; Lars was the woman's sweetheart.

"Yes, just fancy his being fond of that creature. But they all say there is a great deal of good in Lars. He goes there every evening to see what he can do for her. This evening he came earlier than usual, so I got away; but generally I stay there much longer."

"Have you read to her more than once?"

"Yes, to-day I did. She began to cry at once, but I do think she heard me to-day; for I read about the Prodigal Son, and she said: 'I expect I am one of his swine.'" Both the lads laughed. "Then I spoke to her and said I could not believe that, and that I would try and pray. 'Oh,' said she, 'there's not much use in that;' but when I began to say 'Our Father,' she became perfectly crazy, just as though she were frightened, and sat up in bed crying out that she would not hear another word, not for anything. Then

she lay down again and sobbed most bitterly."

"So you never said your prayer after all?"

"No, for then Lars came in, and she told me to go. But you see, it did some good. Don't you think I am on the right way?"

Edward was not sure about it. It was clear that his admiration had received a blow. Soon after they separated.

II.

Sometimes in the higher class of schools there reigns a spirit utterly opposed to that prevalent in the town where the school is; and it is even a rule that in certain matters the school exists under its own independent influence. One single master can often keep the pupils to his own way of thinking, just as it may depend on one or several of the boys whether there is a chivalrous spirit among them or the opposite, a spirit of obedience or one of rebellion; as a rule there is one who leads them all. It is the same, too, as regards morality; the boys become what they are according to the example set before them, and oftenest it is one or more of themselves who have the power to set this example.

Just at this time it was Anders Hegge, the dux of the school, who took the lead in everything. He was the cleverest and best-read boy the school had seen since its foundation; he was to stay there a year longer than was necessary, so as to lend to the school the glory of a certain double first. The other boys were tremendously proud of him; they told admiring tales of how he had been known to catch the masters at fault, that he could choose what lessons he liked, and could come and go whenever he pleased; he did his lessons, too, mostly alone. He had a library, the shelves of which had long since covered the walls and now stood out upon the floor; there was one long shelf on each side of the sofa; it was so much talked about that the smaller boys were allowed to go up and look at it all. And there, in the middle, in

front of the window, sat he smoking, in a long loose dressing-gown, a present from a married sister, a velvet cap with gold tassel, a present from an aunt (his mother's sister), and embroidered slippers, from another aunt (his father's sister). He was quite a ladies' man, lived with his mother, who was a widow, and five elderly female relatives paid for his books and his clothes, and gave him pocket-money.

He was a tall, stout fellow, with marked, regular features, showing descent from a good old family; the face would have been good-looking enough, but his eyes were too prominent and had something at once greedy and inquiring about them. It was the same with his well-made figure; the effect would have been good but that he stooped so much, just as if his back were too heavy for him, and his walk was uneven. His hands and feet were neat, he was dainty and particular, and his tastes in general were effeminate.

He never forgot anything that had once been told him, important or not it made no difference; except, perhaps, he considered the trifling things of most importance. Few things escaped him; he had a quiet way of gaining the confidence of others, it was quite an art. He knew the history of all the great families in the whole country and in foreign countries as well; his greatest delight in life was to repeat these stories, especially when they were scandalous ones, and to sit listening greedily for new ones. If the masters had only known how the air of the school was infected and corrupted by this much-admired piece of goods, with the contents of its secret drawers, they would hardly have kept him there another year; the whole school was critical and doubting, full of slander and mean efforts to curry favor, and infected by slanderous stories.

Ever eager for news, he was always to be found in his smoking-gear, sitting among his books, and was there, too, when Edward came in that evening to tell him that he knew now where Ole went to and what he did with himself; so now he expected to get the reward! Anders got up and begged him to wait till he fetched some beer that

they might enjoy themselves together.

The first glass was most delicious, a second little half glass equally so, but not till then did Edward tell his news--how Ole went to nurse the sick down in the fishing village.

Anders felt almost as small as Edward had done when he saw Ole's Bible in his box; Edward laughed heartily at him. But very soon Anders began to insinuate doubts; he suggested that Ole had invented all that so as to screen himself; there must be something more under it all; peasant boys, he said, were always so cunning, and to prove it he began telling some rather good stories from school. Edward did not at all relish this everlasting doubting, and to cut the matter short (for he was very tired) he informed the other that his father knew and approved of it, and even helped Ole with money. Of course when he heard that, Anders could doubt no longer; and yet there might be more under it, peasant boys were so very sly.

But this was too much for Edward; he started up from his seat and asked if he thought any of them told lies?

Anders sipped his beer quite calmly, rolling his prominent eyes cautiously around. "Lie" was a strange word to use; might he be allowed to ask who were the sick people Ole went to see?

Edward was not prepared for this; he had intended to tell as much as would justify his getting the reward, but not a word more. He got up from his seat again. If Anders wouldn't believe him, he might leave it alone, but he meant to have the reward.

Now it was not Anders Hegge's way to quarrel with anyone, and Edward knew that well. Of course he would give Edward the book, but first he must just listen to such a funny story about the sick people down in the fishing village. The parish doctor and his wife had been to see his mother yesterday, and someone had asked after Martha from the docks, who had not been seen for so long, whether she was still laid up from her fall in the winter? Yes, she was still laid up, but she was not in any

want, for, strange to say, people sent her all she needed, and Lars brought in brandy to her every evening, and they had many a merry carouse together. She would probably not be up again for some time to come.

Edward got very red, and Anders noticed it directly; he suggested that perhaps Martha was one of those whom Ole visited.

Yes she was.

His prominent eyes widened at this piece of news. Edward saw with what eagerness he gulped it down and it made him feel as if he had been devoured and swallowed up himself. But if there is a thing that schoolboys cannot stand it is to be thought too confiding and innocent; he hastened to free himself from the most insulting insinuation that he was not able to see through Ole Tuft and his stupid ways; only fancy, he actually read the Bible to Martha!

He read the Bible to her? Again those prominent eyes opened and greedily drank it in, but he closed them at once, and was seized with laughter; he regularly shouted with laughter--and Edward with him.

Yes, he read the Bible to Martha, he read to her about the Prodigal Son, and then Edward repeated all that Martha had said. They laughed in chorus and drank up the rest of the beer. All that was pleasant and amusing in Anders showed itself when he laughed, although his laugh had a grating sound down in the throat; still it incited one to more fun, more mischief. So Edward had to tell all, and a little more than all.

As he ran home later with the grand book under his arm, he had a kind of disgusted feeling. The effects of the beer were over, he was no longer tempted to laugh, and his wounded pride was satisfied; but Ole's trusting eyes seemed to meet him everywhere, as soon as he got out in the air. He tried to put it from him, he was so dreadfully tired; he would think no more about it this evening; but to-morrow--to-morrow he would ask Anders not to speak about it.

But the next morning he overslept himself. He hurried on his clothes and rushed off,

eating his bread-and-butter as he went along, and giving a rapid thought to "Les trois Mousquetaires," now his precious property; he longed for the afternoon to be able to read it. In school he stumbled through his lessons one by one, for he had learned nothing, and on Saturdays there was always so much. He worked on until two hours before the school closed; there was still to be French and Natural History, but to neither of these classes did he belong--so away he flew downstairs before any of the others.

Just as he stood outside the school gates he saw Anders coming from the opposite side; he was going now to take his lesson in the upper class. Edward thought at once of the preceding day, and he felt anxious as to what Anders might take it into his head to tell; but at that very moment he caught sight of a monster steamer, a wreck, coming slowly in between the two piers, and all the people running by said there had never been so large a ship in the harbour before. She dragged along, hardly able to move, her masts gone, bulwarks all damaged, and the propped-up funnel all white with salt water up to the very top; was that another steamer towing her? Edward could not make out for the pier. Everyone was running that way; he ran too!

Meanwhile Anders turned in at the school gate. Just as he opened it a class was over, and all the boys rushed down the stairs as through a long funnel, and out into the yard; it was a storm in a wizard's belly, the very house shook; first came one short, sharp yell, the first-comer's shout of delight; then a screaming of mingled voices high and low, some cracked and breaking ones toning down the whole; then a mighty shout from all together like a sea of fire shooting up to the sky, then half quenched on one side, but flaring up again on the other, then uniting in a broad glow over the whole yard.

Anders whistled softly as he came along; it was not like being in a sea of fire; it was like sailing through dangerous rocks and reefs, tossed about and dashed from one side, and tossed and dashed back again to the other; but he had an object in view; he

would try cautiously to reach the stack of wood over by the neighbour's paling; there all was quiet, and he could partially screen his body up among the wood.

When he had reached this point of vantage and had looked cautiously round to see if it was safe, he gazed down on the crowd with delight; he felt a pleasurable satisfaction in knowing that he could quiet this uproar just with three or four words which he would whisper in the ear of his nearest neighbour. They would act like oil upon a raging sea, and the noise would cease as those few words were spread about.

Where was Ole? There he was, he and a big boy together; they had hold of each other by the collar and were tumbling about; the bigger of the two was trying to knock down the other, using his feet freely for many a kick. Ole's heavy boots swung round, the iron heels shining in the air; he shouted with laughter as his companion grew fiercer and wilder, but could not get him down.

Then Anders bent his head down to the boy who stood nearest him:

"Now I know what Ole Tuft does in the evenings!"

"Oh, rubbish!"

"But I do know."

"Who found it out?"

"Edward Kallem."

"Edward Kallem? And has he got the book?" asked the other, hurriedly.

"Of course he has."

"No, really? So Edward Kallem has----!"

"Edward Kallem? What about him?" put in a third, and the one who had just heard the news repeated the story. A fourth boy, a fifth, a sixth, all rushed away, crying out: "Edward Kallem has won the prize, lads! Anders Hegge knows what Ole Tuft does in the evenings." Wherever they went the noise stopped instantaneously; all of them wanted to hear the news, and rushed across to Anders Hegge.

Hardly had a fourth part of them reached him before the remaining three-fourths, losing interest in their games, followed suit. What in all the world was the matter over by the wood-stack? why were they all running there? They crowded round Anders, and climbed up on the wood as many of them as could find room. "What's the matter?" "Edward Kallem has won the prize." "Edward Kallem?" And the noise began again, everyone asking, everyone answering--all except Ole Tuft, who remained standing just where his companion had left him.

There was a dead silence as Anders Hegge told the story; and he had a right to tell it, for he had paid for it. He told it well, in a short, dry sort of way that gave an air of double meaning to everything; he told them first where Ole went to and what he did; how he changed the straw in Martha's bed, moved and lifted her, cooked for her, and fetched medicine for her from the apothecary. Then he told them why Ole did all this; he wished to be a missionary, and was practising for it down at Martha's; he read the Bible to her and made her cry; then, as soon as Ole had gone, Lars, the washerman, came in with the brandy bottle, and he and Martha had a grand carouse together on the top of the Bible reading.

At first the boys stood as quiet as mice; they had never heard the like before. They looked upon it as a sort of game, and from the way it had been told it could hardly be understood otherwise; but never before had they heard of anyone playing at being missionary and Bible-reader; it was funny, but it was something else besides--something they could not quite make out. As nobody laughed, Anders continued. And what made Ole do all this? Because he was ambitious and wanted to become an apostle, which was more than to be either king, emperor, or pope; Ole had told Edward Kallem that himself. But, in order to become an apostle, he had to find out "God's ways," and those ways began down at Martha's; there he meant to learn how to work miracles, to wrestle with the heathen and the wild beasts and poisonous snakes, and to calm a cyclone. Then there was a roar. But just at that moment the school-bell rang, and, shouting with laughter, the boys had only time to

run past Ole back to their lessons again.

Once before in his young life had Ole Tuft gazed down into a bottomless abyss. It was on a winter's day, as he stood by his father's grave and heard the dull sound of the frozen earth falling upon the coffin; the air was thick with driving mist, and the sea was black as pitch. Whenever he was in trouble his thoughts flew back to that day; and now it seemed as if he were standing there again, and heard the mournful church bells toll. Just as the noise on the stairs and along the passages had ceased, the last stray loiterer gone in, the last door been shut--complete quiet suddenly--then, through this empty silence, he heard a bell, ding-dong, and in fancy saw himself at the little pine-wood church by the shore. How they creaked and rustled in the wind, those long-armed, leafless birches by the wall, and the ancient fir-tree at the gate; the clanging of the bells, harsh and shrill, floating in the air, and the dull thud of the earth on the coffin, made a life-long impression on him; and his mother's ceaseless weeping--she had kept it all back until now, had made no sound, neither by the sick man's bedside, nor even when he was carried away in his coffin; but now, suddenly, the tears gushed forth--ah, so bitterly.... O father, mother! Mother, father! And he, too, burst into tears.

This was sufficient reason for his not following the other boys in; he would never go back to school again. He could not face any of them after what had happened, he would have to leave the town; in a couple of hours it would be known everywhere, they would all be asking questions, and staring and laughing at him. And now, too, all his hopes and intentions for the future had been profaned; what was the use of studying any more; nor would he go to any other town, only home, home, home.

But if he stood there much longer one of them would be sent down to fetch him; he ought to get away at once. But not home to his aunt, or he would have to tell her everything; and not out by the big gates and down the principal street, for there were so many people who would see how he was crying. No, he must make his way to the

little hiding-place that Josephine had made for him, and through which she helped him out every afternoon, so that the other boys might not see him.

The wood-stacks stood next to the neighbour's paling; but to the right leaned up against a shed into which Ole went. He loosened two boards in the wall nearest the wood-stack, crept through, and closed them behind him. This performance could not have been carried out if there had not been on the other side an open space, made by an impediment of nature, in the shape of a large stone, taller than the boy, but which stood at a little distance from the wall. If the stone had not been there, the two stacks of wood would have touched each other and barred the way; but as it was, there was plenty of room at both ends of the stone as well as on the top of it. The children had made themselves little rooms here, one on each side of the stone. The most comfortable one was at the back; there they had a board to sit on, and when that was fastened at both ends in the stacks, they could pass each other in crossing it. They had laid some planks overhead, and then wood on the top of that, so that nobody might suspect anything; it had been quite a piece of work for the children. It was not very light, certainly, but then that made it all the cosier. Here she would tell him tales of Spain, and he would tell her of missionaries' adventures; she told of bull-fights, but he of fights with tigers, lions, and snakes, of terrible cyclones and water-spouts, of savage monkeys and man-eaters. And by degrees his stories had eclipsed hers; they were more exciting, and then there was an object in them; she had only her recollections to look back to, but he threw himself heart and soul into all his imagination could scrape together. He drew such vivid, glowing pictures, till at last she was fascinated too! At first she felt her way with a few cautious questions as to whether women could be missionaries too? But he did not know; he thought it was only work for men, though they might possibly be allowed to be missionaries' wives. Then she asked if missionaries ever married. He, taking it up as a dogmatic question, answered that he had once heard his father speak on the subject; it was at a meeting when someone had had doubts as to this missionary-marriage question, for

St. Paul was the first missionary, and the greatest, too, and he certainly had not been married, and even gloried in that fact; but his father had replied that St. Paul believed that Christ was so soon to come again so he had to hurry as quickly as possible from place to place to tell that to the people so that they might be in readiness. But nowadays missionaries always lived in the same place, and therefore might be allowed to marry. He had even read about missionaries' wives who kept schools for the little black children. They had not advanced further than that, but it was easy to see she often thought about it by the questions she asked: If it were true that black children ate snails? She did not like the idea of that at all.

In this dim light, with their two heads, brown and fair, bent close together over their tales of adventures, they had in fancy sat under palm-trees amid swarms of black children, all so good and clean and converted, and there were tame tiger-cubs playing on the sand at their feet; friendly, good-natured monkeys waited upon them, elephants conveyed them carefully about, and all the food they needed hung in plenty on the trees.

And now Ole came for the last time to say farewell to this little Paradise.

Just as he raised himself to climb over the stone, he remembered that it was Saturday, and her lessons were always over on Saturdays by eleven o'clock (she took private lessons), and that she often used to sit behind the stacks during the boys' free quarter-hour. Suppose she were sitting there, and had heard all? Up he clambered onto the stone in greatest haste, and there she sat, down on the board, and looked at him! At the sight of her and as their eyes met he began sobbing again. "I want to ... go ... home," stammered he, "and never ... never come back again," and he came sliding down to her. She received him with open arms and hastened to give him her pocket-handkerchief to stuff into his mouth that his crying might not be heard. She had a good deal of knowledge as to school and play-ground ways, and knew that some one would soon be sent to look for him. He gave in, as he always did, to her

superior guidance in matters of good behaviour and manners; he thought she was reminding him of that everlasting use of the pocket-handkerchief, so he began alternately to blow his nose and to cry. She seized hold of the back of his neck with one of her small but coarse girl's hands, with the other she grasped his hands with the handkerchief and forced it right into his mouth, at the same time shaking her dark-haired head warningly in his face. Then it dawned upon him! And it was high time too; for he heard his name called down in the yard, again and again on all sides. His whole body shook and trembled with his efforts to stifle his sobs; but he kept them down bravely, waiting till the boy who had been sent down to look for him had gone rushing back again. He began anew: "I ... want to ... go ... home," and a fresh burst of tears followed, he couldn't help it. So he gave her back her pocket-handkerchief with a nod and got up to pull away the wood in front of the hole in the neighbour's fence, sobbing bitterly all the time and half-alarmed at his own grief. Hardly had he pulled the wood aside before he disappeared into the hole; the seat of his trousers, polished and shiny from daily contact with the school benches, and the iron heels of his boots crept farther and farther in, till at last they vanished; he stood upright on the other side, pushed himself between the paling and the shed, and on past some old wood-work which lay there rotting, from there he sprang across to the back door, and not until he stood outside on free ground in a narrow road, did he remember that he had forgotten to say good-bye to Josephine and had never even thanked her! This addition to all his other troubles made him turn and flee from the town, and he never stopped before he, by roundabout ways, had reached the high road. It was almost as if it were his property, this well-known road by the shore.

Josephine stood still a moment gazing after the vanishing heels; but she did not wait long. She hopped upon the stone and slid down to the wall, pushed the boards aside, crept through and closed them again carefully behind her. Soon after she was seen at the apothecary's without her hat; she asked after her brother, first down in the shop

where she knew he liked to be, but he was not there and he had not been in either to leave his bundle of books. Upstairs she went through all the rooms, but he was not there; then looking out of the window she saw the great foreign steamer and ten or twelve small boats around it; of course he would be there! Away she flew to the pier, unfastened their own little white-painted boat and pushed off.

She rowed until the perspiration streamed down her face, rowed and looked about her until she reached the wreck, the great green monster lying there groaning under the pumps. From afar she could see Edward up on the captain's bridge, with his books under his arm, talking to his friend Mo, the pilot.

As soon as she was within call she shouted his name; he heard her, he and all the others; they saw a brown-haired girl, without hat, red and heated with rowing, standing up in the boat, leaning on her oars, and staring up at the captain's bridge; they did not think much of it, though, and forgot her quickly. But Edward felt a sharp pang; something out of the common must have happened, and it did not take him long to get down from the captain's bridge on to the deck, across the deck and down the steamer's side, climbing over the other boats and up into hers, exclaiming, as he pushed off: "What's the matter?" He put his books down in the bottom of the boat, took the oars from her and sat down repeating: "What's the matter?"

With streaming hair, breathless and red she stood and looked at him as he turned the boat; then she moved back to a farther bench. Here she unfastened the other pair of oars and sat down behind him. He did not like to question her a third time so he rowed on silently--and then, keeping her oars on the surface of the water meanwhile, she began:

"What have you done to Ole Tuft?"

He turned pale, then red; he too stopped rowing.

"It's all up with him now at school; he has gone home, and he'll never come back any more."

"Oh, that's a lie!"--but his voice failed him, he felt she was speaking the truth. He plunged the oars into the water with all his strength and rowed with might and main.

"Indeed you had better row hard," though she herself began backing her oars; "you had better hurry after him even if you have to walk all the way to Store Tuft; if you don't, it will be a bad look-out for you both at school and at home with father. What a mean wretch you are!"

"Oh, you hold your tongue!"

"No, I shan't! and if you don't go after him at once and bring him home with you again, I'll tell father, and the head master too, I will!"

"It's you who are the mean wretch with all your gossiping and story-telling."

"You should have heard how Anders Hegge went on, and the whole school, and how they laughed at Ole, every one of them; and he poor fellow, he cried as if his heart would break, and then ran right away home. Oh, fie! fie! For shame! If you don't bring him back with you it will be bad for you."

"You stupid! Don't you see I am rowing as hard as I can?"

His finger-nails were quite white and his face streaming and he bent double each time to take a longer pull at the oars. Without another word she moved over to the bench nearest him and rowed with all her might.

As he stood up when they were nearing the pier and stretched out his hand to prevent the boat bumping against it, he said: "I have had no lunch to-day, and now I shall get no dinner either; have you any money with you that I might buy myself some biscuits?"

"Yes, a few pence I have;" she laid down her oars and looked in her pocket for the money.

"You take my books!" shouted he as he rushed up the street. Shortly after he too was out on the high road.

III.

The day had been dull, the air thick, and the clouds were driving along against a light southerly wind; it was mild, though, and had begun to thaw again; the roads were in a fearful state with snow slush and mud, especially close by the town where it had been trampled and trodden into a perfect morass.

Edward had not been walking more than ten minutes before his somewhat thin boots were wet through. Well, that did not matter, what was much worse was that he had finished his last biscuit and was by no means satisfied--not by a long way! However, even that did not matter as he would soon overtake Ole, he walked so much quicker and lighter than he did, and then he was hurrying tremendously. As soon as he reached him he would put things right again; not for an instant did he doubt that. Ole was very easily managed and he, Edward, would make all square with the other boys, it was the least he could do; he would enjoy it, too; he would get others to join him and they would have a fight.

But after he had walked a quarter of a mile[1] without seeing any traces of Ole's boots in the mud and no sign of himself either, and particularly after he had dragged on for another quarter along the most dreadful roads, his feet dripping wet, now perspiring, now cold, then half-dry, then wet again--it was threatening rain and the wind was getting up, and all nature seemed so uncomfortably lonely along the stony ridges with dark woods between each valley--then indeed his courage fell considerably.

And it seemed so strange, too, that after the first quarter of a mile he never met a soul. There were plenty of footmarks on the road both of horses, people, and dogs; they were all bent in the same direction as himself and most of them were quite fresh, but there was not a creature to be seen anywhere, not even in the farmyards, not a dog did he hear bark, nor did he see a chimney smoke; all was deserted. He passed by one empty cove after the other; they were divided by jutting out ridges of

loose stones caused by landslips; on each side of these ridges lay a cove, and in every cove one or more farmyards and a brook or stream, but no people. So many times had the boy now struggled up these stony hills and gone so far along that he could see across the next field without distinguishing Ole on the high road, in fact without seeing anyone, so he began to think that he would have to trudge on, hungry and tired as he was, the whole way to Store Tuft. It was nearly a mile distant; that would keep him away so long that his father would hear of his absence, and then it would be a case of scolding and lecturing, and probably of beating and swearing as well, and the head-master would very likely look in and then it would all begin over again.... He could not help it, the tears would come. Confound Anders Hegge, with his greedy, fishy eyes and oily smile, his mocking laugh and sneaking friendliness, the story-teller, the brute! Here was he now forced to tramp along with tingling feet in all the mud, tired and done up. This then was the meaning of his fearful fright the evening before, now all was explained.

But, hang it all! who would cry about that? One must arrive some day at the journey's end, and a beating would be nothing new, tra-la-la! And he broke into a Spanish ditty and sang verse upon verse till he became quite breathless and was obliged to slacken his pace, but taking fright when he no longer heard the sound of his own voice, he began afresh and kept on singing all the way through the long valley.

He met nobody there either, only traces of cart-wheels and footmarks of old and young folk, of horses and dogs from the farms; all bound in the same direction. What could be going on? A fire? An auction? But then they would not have taken carts with them. Had there been a landslip anywhere? Or was it a wreck from yesterday's storm? Well, it was all the same to him. Just as he was crossing over the next ridge which jutted out into the bay, he caught sight for the first time of Ole's footsteps on the hill; he could see that he had walked along by the side of the road; he recognized the iron heels and the straps under each foot. The marks were quite

fresh too, so Ole could not be far off. This was exciting, and he hurried on.

Here there was a thick fir-wood, very still and quiet, and as he had to stop singing going up-hill it was rather uncanny. The farther he advanced into the wood the thicker it became; the snow lay firmer on the ground, stones and small tufts of heather peeping up through it like animals; and then there was a crack here and a rustle there and sometimes a cry; a startled capercailzie flew up with great flapping of wings, and the boy in a terrible fright bent down to look for Ole's foot-marks, just for company's sake--the terror of the day before was on him again. If he dared but begin to run, and if the wood would only come to an end! In the painfully long silence that followed the capercailzie's cry he felt that a very little more and he would go mad with fright. And this bit of road with high banks on each side, through which he would have to pass--he looked on ahead at the steep dark sides which seemed as if they would close over him; terrible looking trees hung over the top peering down at him. When at last he arrived there, he felt as if he were the tiniest little ant in a wood; if only all would keep still, or at least no one swoop down upon him and seize him by the neck, or drop down suddenly before him, or behind him, or begin to puff and blow at him.... He walked on with stiff eyes, like one walking in his sleep, the gnarled and crooked roots of the fir-trees stretched along the banks, they seemed as though alive, but he pretended not to notice them. High up in the air far in front of him a bird was winging its way toward the town he came from. Ah, if he might but mount that bird! He could see the town distinctly and the ships in the harbour; he could hear the cheery heave-a-hoy songs and the rattling of anchor chains, the rolling of barrels along the wharf, and the merry screams of laughter and the shouts of command.... Yes, he could even hear those, and the whistle of a steamer! and then another, a shrill one! and voices! Those were voices! And neighing of horses, and barking of dogs! And again the sound of voices, many voices. He had got through the road with the steep banks, for it had only been a short bit, and through the trees he could see the sea and boats.... But what was that? Was

he back in town again? Had he been walking round and round? No, surely he had followed the sea all the way. He began to run, he felt all right again. But had he really walked straight on? Of course, here is the clearing in the wood, and there the bay, he knew it well, and the little islands, he remembered them too, it was the right way, and it was not so very far now to Store Tuft.... But what are all those boats doing there? And what is the meaning of that steady buzzing noise? Herring fishing! Hurrah! herring fishing! He had come right into the midst of a take of herrings, hurrah! hurrah! And away with hunger, fatigue, and fear, off flew the boy down the hill with mighty strides.

One of the sweep-nets had been hauled in, one was out, one was just going to be put out, it was a great take. But it was Saturday evening, and it was necessary to net the herrings before Sunday evening, and to gut the fish that was already taken. In the twinkling of an eye he understood it all.

The shore was crowded with people, near the road and on the road, and up on the fields, crowds and crowds. And endless carts and sledges with barrels and tubs, some with horses still harnessed, others with the horses taken out, crowds of dogs; children everywhere, and great laughter and noise. Out in the bay the boats were round the sweep-net that was to be put out, the men shouting and calling to each other, and high in the air a flock of birds flew overhead, flapping their wings and screaming.

The sky was overcast, the smoke from the steamers making the air seem thicker and more threatening, the bare, bleak islands seemed suited to the coming storm, they looked as if they had just started into existence; the little wooded islet far out rose up solitary and mysterious through the rainy mist; the steamers came steaming in, puffing and whistling as if for a wager; they belonged to rival companies. Men were stamping about in fishermen's boots and in oilskin clothes over their ordinary ones; others were dressed more like peasants in coarse cloth coats and fur caps. Women as

well as men were busy cleaning the fish, wrapped in shawls or in a man's jacket over their own; the usual quiet style of conversation had been disturbed.

Heavy drops of rain began to fall, faster and faster; nearly all the faces Edward looked at were wet with the rain. They stared a great deal at him, the delicate looking town boy in the midst of this noisy crowd, thinly clad, with dripping face and breathless, his little fur cap clinging wet to his head.

Who should he see just in front of him but Ingebert Syvertsen, the tall, black-haired man, who did business with his father. He was standing there bargaining, tall and thin, and dressed in oilskin from top to toe; he had evidently taken a very active part in it all, the shiny fish-scales lay thick on his arms and his boots like silver.

"Good day, Ingebert!" shouted the boy in great light.

The great fellow with wet face under his sou'wester, a great drop hanging from his nose, thin black beard, and three of his upper teeth missing, knew him at once and laughed; then he said: "Your father is somewhere about my lad, he is out riding to-day."

Someone spoke to Ingebert at that moment; he turned round, became angry and abusive, which took up time, when he turned again to speak to the boy he saw him already far away along the road beyond the whole of the fishing crowd.

Edward had run away from sheer fright--and it was only when he found himself out on the road that he remembered he was running just in the direction his father was coming from. Was it likely he could get to Store Tuft without meeting his father?

But what was he to do? All those people had seen him, and had stared hard at him, they would be sure to find out who he was, and then when his father came riding past he would hear of it too. There was not much use trying to run away. It was all one whether he got a beating now or one later. He felt inclined to sing again, for nothing could be worse than the present state of affairs. He actually did strike up a song, the Marseillaise, in French; it was so very suitable for one advancing to get a

beating as he was! But before he got to the end of the first verse his courage failed him, his voice grew fainter, the time slower, there was a general change of colouring. And oh, it was heavy walking, and raining fast. So his song gradually died away until it stopped. Then the boy's thoughts went back to something he had lately read in the papers about a large coal mine in England that had been inundated with water. The miners tried to escape as quickly as possible, the horses after them, down in the mine they could not help themselves, poor creatures! One boy who had escaped told the others about a horse that had neighed and whinnied so hopelessly; the boy climbed to the top, but not the horse.... Edward could distinctly see what the horse must have looked like, its head, the beautiful shining eyes, he heard its breathing, its whinnying and felt himself turn quite sick. What it must be to die amid such horrors! And to think that all that would come to life again at the day of judgment! And all that would arise from the mines and very bowels of the earth! Why not the animals too? Surely they would come forward whining and complaining against mankind? Great heavens, what complaints there would be. And so many animals, too--only fancy, from the creation of the world! And where were they all to be found? On the earth and down in the earth--and think of those that lay in the sea, at the bottom of the deep sea! And those who lay under that again, for in many places there had been land where there now was sea. Well, well!

Oh, how hungry he was! And cold too; he could no longer walk so fast, and he was very, very tired.

And certainly there was nothing very inviting to look forward to, oh, no! Well he knew the new riding-whip; he had himself despatched the old one out of the world; but if he had known that the new one was still worse, he would have let the old one live on for a couple of years more. Ouf! how his nails began to ache and his fingers to swell with the cold. And his feet! But it would never do to think about them or they got worse directly; hark, how the water sopped in his boots! He amused himself by putting his feet forward cross ways, and went on from right to left, from left to

right till he got tired of that too. Harder and harder was the struggle, more and more tedious, again he had to climb up hill. Dear me! is not this the last hill? Does not Store Tuft lie in the next valley? Just under the hill? Surely that is Store Tuft? Perhaps after all he could get there before his father? It would always be something gained, the evil day put off awhile. At any rate it was worth hurrying for. Fresh life came to the boy, on he went again!

His father was not always severe either, he could be kind sometimes. Especially if Josephine were on his side and asked to get him off; and if Ole came back again then she surely would do that, she must take his part. They could try, too, to make the apothecary join them! He, the apothecary, was always so kind, and it is a good thing to be many. Good heavens! were there no others who----

Up came the chestnut's head over the hill-top! The big straw shoes which his father used in the winter as stirrups stood out on each side of the old hack like the paws of a wild beast; the boy stood still, petrified.

The old hack stared at the lad from out of its heavy Spanish harness; it could hardly believe its own clever eyes! Neither could the boy's father believe his, for the round head in the gray woollen cap stretched farther and farther forward over the horse's neck, till he had to lean with both hands on the pommel of the saddle. Was that drenched, dripping boy, with the wisp of fur on his head, standing terrified and pale as a ghost in the middle of the road--was that the boy who ought to be sitting at home doing his lessons before he was allowed to move? And on Saturday afternoon! In such weather and such roads, and so thinly clad, out on the hill at Store Tuft? And without permission?

"What the devil are you doing there?"

The horse was pulled up sharp; its warm breath seemed to fill the air around the boy and envelop him in a thick mist of unpleasant vapours from its steaming body. Edward dared neither move nor answer. He only stared up at his father through the

mist in a stupid, clumsy fashion, as though half-dazed.

His father dismounted without delay, and with the bridle round his left arm and the whip in his right hand he stood before the boy.

"What's the matter? Hey? Why are you here! Why the devil can't you answer?"

Mechanically Edward slipped farther and farther away, his father after him; mechanically, too, the boy raised his right arm to shield his face, and stretched out his left to ward off the coming blows.

"Where are you going to?"

"To Ole Tuft."

"What are you going to do there? Hey? Is Ole Tuft at home? Hey?"

"Yes."

"What are you going there for?"

"I am going to--to----"

"Well!"

"To beg his pardon."

"To beg his pardon? What for? What for? Hey?" and he raised his whip.

The boy answered, hurriedly: "He won't come to school any more."

"Oh, indeed! So you've been teasing him? Hey? You at the head? Hey?"

"Yes."

"Your fault, was it? Hey?" he cried.

"I found out----" here he stopped.

"Well?"

"That he--that he----" and the boy began to cry.

"Well?"

"That he goes to visit the sick."

"So you told the others? Hey? Carried tales? Hey?"

Edward dared not answer, and then the whip began to be troublesome; both the lad's arms swung up and down, keeping time with the whip, as if uncertain where it would fall next. He kept slipping farther and farther away.

"Stand still!" shouted his father.

But instead the boy sprang with one bound right to the edge of the ditch. Fiercely the father lifted his whip again; but, unintentionally, the horse behind him received such a sharp cut that it pulled so hard at the bridle as nearly to upset its master. Edward could not resist the comical side of this most welcome deliverance and he burst into a roar of laughter. But he was so startled at hearing himself laugh that he hopped over the ditch and ran into the wood. He could not possibly control himself as he turned away; he began to laugh again, and could hit upon no better way of hiding it than to set up a good howl.

The father's contempt for his son was not to be described. He recovered his temper, though, quieted the horse, and mounted again. "Come along," said he, quietly, pointing with his whip in the direction of the Tuft valley.

"There will be more accounts to settle when we get there," thought the boy to himself.

He obeyed his father's call, of course, and walked on, but at a safe distance in front of the horse. He kept at the same distance all the time; the horse was a quick stepper, so it was an effort.

The man in gray on the chestnut horse drove his son mercilessly on before him, through the snow and slush, although one could clearly see by the way he walked that his feet hurt him, and although his hands were half-frozen--he kept putting them in his mouth--and although he was dripping wet; his fur cap was sticking to his head like a washed-out rag. The man in gray sat comfortably on his horse, in warm,

waterproof clothes, his whip in his hand, his eyes glistening on each side of his hooked nose. No one who saw this little procession could have guessed that the dearest wish of this stern-looking man was to love the boy he was so angrily driving before him.

But in order to love anyone that person must be exactly as we would wish--is not that the case? And supposing now the boy was not willing? And that Kallem was not accustomed to opposition? His wife's death was the first serious blow he had met with; it happened not very long before this affair with the boy. Up to that time they had all lived abroad, Kallem leading a quiet retired life with his wife, his business, sport, and his silent books (he was a great reader), and had never been worried or annoyed. His wife's brother took charge of the business, which was a flourishing one, and his wife took charge of the house, where all flourished too. Everything was managed without fear or disturbance, and exactly as was proper, until the wife died. But afterward!

At first neither he himself nor any of the others could realize the unexpected change that had come over him. Some people thought that the loss of his wife had made him mad; he himself thought that the air of Spain was too warm; he was anxious to leave, and longed for home. The head of the firm agreed at once. It would be a capital speculation to move the principal house of business to Norway and just have a branch house in Spain. And so they left--now about a year ago.

But it was the boy who, when they were still in Spain, had been the cause of his father's first losing command of himself, and indeed the second time too, and unfortunately also the third, fourth, fifth, sixth time; it was always the boy. And the same thing, too, when they had moved to Norway. Hot or cold climate, the boy was equally troublesome.

Soon there began to come complaints about him over from the school, then from the apothecary, who was an old friend of Kallem's, and in whose house they had

lodgings; then from the courtyard, from the neighbours, and from the wharf. But possibly other parents also heard complaints about their sons, and perhaps people in this part of the world were more given to complaining; of course Kallem could know nothing about that, for he was a solitary man. But he knew that his son was the cleverest lad in all the school; one master after the other came and assured him of that; he knew that nothing was lacking in the boy, neither heart nor will; but he was peculiar, indifferent to all, and yet liked meddling in matters that did not concern him. He was both brave and cowardly, a shameful tease, and altogether hopelessly naughty. He would have tried the patience of an angel from heaven, to say nothing of Kallem, who was entirely without that virtue.

This thin, slippery customer, limping on in front of him with frightened side-glances at both horse and whip, had spoilt the peace of his father's life. Not only had he made him feel inwardly so unsafe and uncertain, but at times his want of power became perfect helplessness, and on those occasions he longed to beat the boy to smithereens.

He would send for him and try both threats and entreaties. Last night, the night of the storm, he had kept guard over him and used all his powers of persuasion trying to talk the boy out of his shameful fright, scolded him and tried to make it clear to him by all manner of natural history proofs that the prophecy about the end of the world was all a lie, an invention. The boy answered, yes, and indeed, but did not believe a word his father said! As soon as the storm broke he was like one crazy, out and away in the most abject state of fear.

And here he is now to-day, out on the open high road, a mile from the town, in rain, storm, and wind, and of course without permission. First he goes and ill-treats the best lad in the school, a little fellow whom Kallem was really fond of and had helped with a few pence now and then for his little mission, which he heard of from Josephine; and then on the top of that----

"Look at him!" said he, to himself. "Deuce take the boy, if he isn't laughing!" but he pretended not to see it.

What was that? Why, the horse behind him with "What the devil" on its back, and the whip, and the heavy tramp, tramp in the snow and slush. Sop-sop, sop-sop, sop-sop, sop-sop; all this grew and grew and got larger and larger, until it became a huge monster all twisted and shapeless.... Hurriedly the boy began thinking of other things. He threw himself into the coal-mine in England that had been inundated, and tried to conjure up before him the horse that had neighed so piteously after the escaping miner lad. But no, he could not force himself into the mine; there was nothing but the high road and "sop-sop, sop-sop," and "What the devil" and his whip, and he himself in front limping along with one leg and a half, he, he--e--e!

A shrill "Hey!" came from behind. The sound seemed to creep down the boy's back like a sharp piece of ice.

Presently Store Tuft came in sight. It lay just below the hill they were going down. There were many outhouses, most of them in a square round the farmyard; a stream rushed noisily by on the other side where the corn and saw-mills lay; the islands outside and the two arms of land on either side shut in the bay so completely that the water there was as still and quiet as a millpond, with ice in the corners; there was a row of boathouses side by side along the bay; there were fruit-gardens, too, most of them a good size.

The smoke rose up from the house-chimney at Store Tuft--at last! Ole's mother must be cooking dinner for him! And hunger, grief, and longing came over the boy, and the thought of a warm room and dry clothes, and the remembrance of his own mother and of their home in Spain nearly made him cry again; but then he thought that his father would say: "Devil take him! Now he's crying again!" so he controlled himself.

He looked toward the farm with fear and trembling.

The house lay with its longest side out to the garden; it was a two-storied wooden house, painted red, with white window-sills. They turned up the road, the boy still in front, the father after him.

Passing the short end of the house they came into the yard; on the other side of that lay cow-house and stable, under the same roof; these buildings were quite new, and lay at right angles with the barn, wood-house, and other buildings in the middle. A herd of goats stood in this corner munching leaves, and surrounded by an incredible number of sparrows. The whole party were collected together just outside the barn.

The goats caught sight of the newcomers; they lifted their heads and stretched out their necks all at the same moment, their eyes wide open, ears standing up stiff, with the last bite immovable in their mouths, inquisitive to the last degree. The billy-goat only kept on munching as he looked at them, lazily satisfied. The flock of sparrows flew away with a whirr.

Between the cattle-stable and the short end of the dwelling-house, the father stopped and dismounted. The boy was already inside the yard, and stood staring at the barn roof, which was broken up and being renewed, but there were no workmen to be seen; probably they had gone off to the herring fishery; the ladder still stood on the scaffolding, leaning upward.

"Stop!" shouted the father, and the boy stopped and turned round; his father was tying up his old hack to one of the grinding stones which stood up against this short end of the dwelling-house; the lad stood and looked on.

"Wonderful, how quiet he is now," thought the father, as he came forward and pointed with his whip. The boy was to walk in front of him up to the broad stone step at the entrance in the middle of the house. And he did so. Past a sledge with railed-in seat that was standing there; he discovered two kittens playing with each other through the railing, the one inside, the other outside. The windows they went past were so low that they could see right through the little room which had

windows on the other side, and through that again into the other room. There sat Ole in a huge shirt that reached down to his feet, in front of the hearth with his legs up; his mother stood beside him, bending over some pots and pans. Edward had not time to see more; he stepped over the stone and into the passage, where he was met by a strong smell of fish, both old and new; also a smell of something else which he could not at first make out. The father pointed on to the right; to the left, too, there was a door, grandly painted and with a brass handle, and he was not meant to go there. No, thought the boy, I knew that much, too, that we were to go where there are people, and not into the cold guest room. He put his swollen fingers on the latch and lifted it.

The fireplace was in the corner to the left, close by the door, and one can fancy how the two in there opened their eyes! To such an extent that curly-lock's head stretched up out of his father's wide blue linen shirt. The mother was tall and had a delicate face; she wore a black cap; her fair hair was puffed out down her cheeks and made her face seem long. She turned from her pots and pans toward the two arrivals, whom she knew both. It was a grave but friendly face. She seemed afraid and uncertain. Just at first she did not let her eyes rest on either of them. Ole's boots stood by the fireside; but his clothes, shirt, and stockings were hung up to dry above on some of the many poles that reached across from beam to beam. On the other poles were bundles of wood and various things put up to dry. Dishes and cups stood about just as usual on a weekday.

The room was not painted but wainscoted; on each side under the windows there were red-painted benches. In the corner to the left, at the other side of the window, stood a table with a bookcase above; at the end of the table, just by the door into the smaller room, hung the clock. It ticked as evenly and cheerily as if there had never before been anything but peace in that room. Outside he saw the kittens in the sledge, the one inside sticking its paw out through the railing, and the outside one pushing its paw in; and then he saw Ole's face just in front of him. He was smiling,

was Ole, and it was because he too was afraid. But those pots and pans! Hungry and tired as Edward was, the pots seemed to him the best part of it all. There were potatoes in the one which stood down, quite ready; but two pots still hung over the fire; could it be fish in one of them? But in the other?

The mother hesitated, not knowing what to do; for they remained standing there, the angry looking man and the boy. At last just as she was going to ask them to sit down, or something similar, the father began. He presumed that she knew now what had happened, hey? The boy had come to beg pardon and to receive his punishment; it was quite necessary, for he was a bad boy and nothing but punishing did him any good; kindness was utterly wasted on him.

"Oh, must it be?" said the mother, mildly. She was quite frightened, and Ole turned a bluish-white, like the shirt he had on.

"Yes, he must have a beating! Beg pardon first. Sharp's the word?"

Ole began to cry, not so Edward. Ole could not sit still; he got up, he looked at his mother: "Mother, dear!" said he. He could not get out another word; but his meaning was evident, his mother was to make peace between them.

"Beg pardon!" shouted the father, and the whip became restless.

"But, mother dear!" shrieked Ole.

Then Edward had to come forward. Ole turned away; he could not look on any longer, he was not used to that sort of thing. Edward dived and ducked, his father after him with clanking spurs. In his fright Edward rushed to Ole's mother with outstretched hand; she did not take it, but Ole began to yell. So much sympathy was too much for poor Edward; he too began to roar, as he dashed round and round the mother. There was such a hubbub and noise that again the goats stopped their munching and stared in, listening; the sparrows too, which had come back, flew away over the roof.

And what happened? The sparrows showed the boy the way. Quick as lightning, he

flew past his father and out at the door, which he left wide open behind him. They saw the goats fly on all sides, and the boy into the scaffolding, up the ladder, and on to the roof. Directly he got there he began to pull the ladder up after him.

"Look at him! Look at him!" screamed his father from the window. "Hey!" and away he rushed.

As soon as his son saw him coming he dropped the ladder which fell thundering down. Like a cat the lad ran up the rafters to the ridge of the roof and along that, balancing himself as though he had never done anything else all his life. He thought no more of his aching feet.

His father was in great alarm: "Take care, I say, take care there, take care! Come away from there, and at once! Come down, you young wretch!" He ran out into the yard in his long riding-boots and threatened him with the whip.

"I think I see myself! I shall jump right down into the yard!"

"Mad boy! Devil take him! Will you come down?"

"Yes if you'll not beat me!"

"I won't promise."

"Oh, you won't promise?" and away crept the boy farther out along the ridge.

"Yes, yes! O you wretch! O you coward!"

"Well, have you promised?"

"Devil take your promising. Come down, can't you!"

"And you won't pull my hair either?"

"Down with you! You'll only fall up there!"

"You won't pull my hair and won't beat me, and won't do anything?"

"No, no, no! But come down directly! Look, now you're slipping! Edward, do you hear?" shouted he.

"Well, will you keep to what you promise?"

"Oh! what don't you deserve!" and he threatened up with his whip. "Yes, yes, I promise! But take care!"

But the boy went on: "May I stay here till tomorrow with Ole? May I?"

"I won't answer anything till you come down."

"Oh, you won't? all right!"

"Oh you scoundrel; oh, you miserable rascal!"

"Do you agree, then?"

"Yes, deuce take you! But get away from the outer edge at least! Devil take the boy!"

"I say, it might be just as well if you went away first father."

"Not I; you'll not get me to do that. Never. I must see you down first."

The boy thought this just as well. His father put up the ladder and slowly the lad came down; but not until his father had gone a little way back into the yard. And he kept his distance, although his father wished to speak to him and assured him he would not harm him. Neither would he go into the house as long as his father stayed there; but being wet through, obliged his father to go away.

Five or six minutes after both lads lay kicking on the floor, Edward in just as big a shirt as Ole's and equally naked otherwise; they were both going to put on a pair of thick woollen stockings, of the kind the peasants use that come well up over the thighs. They had thought it easier to try and put them on sitting on the floor, which was strewn with sand. There they pushed each other over and laughed as though many days had gone by since that happened which we have just witnessed. Everything Edward did Ole did after him; they laughed until at last the quiet, gentle mother was obliged to laugh too; there was no end to all that Edward hit upon. They were to put on those long stockings so that they might sit at table and eat their dinner

without feeling too cold; at table there was no fireplace for their legs. And at last they were so far ready they got them on. And then was disclosed the contents of the other pot; it was cream porridge. Edward had never tasted that before. Ole was to be coaxed into better spirits than he was in when he arrived, therefore his mother had made that porridge for him. Edward applauded loudly and greeted the food with laughter.

But all at once Ole sat quite solemn and quiet. What now? Hands folded, eyes cast down? The mother stood before them; she too was serious with folded hands and cast-down eyes. Her face was bent down, it seemed to be vanishing gradually farther and farther, or rather it was as if shutters were put up before and all light in it extinguished. And then she began, as though from afar, a long, long grace, in a low monotonous voice, as if she were talking quietly with someone but at some other place. Edward felt himself out of it all. His loneliness and fright came back again, the old recollections and the old longing for his mother. Then it passed away, pushed back like a shutter; it all vanished behind the hill.

Edward had never before been present when grace was said at meals, and her manner and ways were so altogether new to him, and he did not understand her and her mumbling. He sat very quiet for some time after. Ole did not speak either; all the time while they were dining he was very silent and hardly even smiled. Food was God's gift; a certain solemnity was therefore necessary.

But what a serious matter their eating was! The mother asked them at last if they did not think it would be best to keep a little till the evening? No, they said, this was dinner and supper in one. They were to sleep together in the servant's room, which was used as a spare room; the fire had been lighted there, and now they would sit by the fireside for an hour or so and then go to bed.

The mother saw they would rather be alone, so she left them.

Then afterward when they were in the bedroom! At first the most terrific row; the

bed-clothes and featherbeds flew about them; then they grew calmer after each attack, and at last they began to talk. Ole told how the boys had treated him and Edward promised that he would give that boy such a thrashing--yes, even if it were Anders Hegge himself--if he would not hold his tongue about the "ways of God," and all that, Edward would give him a proper kind of beating. Anders Hegge was a coward. He knew who he would get to help him; they would have such fun!

As they grew more tired they became sentimental. Ole spoke of Josephine and Edward joined in and assured him that she had behaved splendidly that day. He described her as she came rowing out in search of him. Ole thought this grand. Certainly there was something great about Josephine; they both agreed as to that.

Edward could not understand why Ole should wish to be a missionary? Why on earth was it such an excellent thing to go off on wild adventures when one had enough to do here at home? Ole should be a clergyman and he would be a doctor, and they would both live together in the same town; would not that be much nicer?

And Edward went on drawing pictures of their future life. They were to live next door to each other and be often together; in the evenings particularly, with their glass of punch, just as his father and the apothecary were and play chess together as those two did. And they would have a carriage for high days and holidays, and each harness his own horse to it and drive out together; it would be more sociable like that. Or else they would live by the sea-side and have a big boat between them; everything must be between them.

In Ole's fancy Josephine was to be always with them, though Edward did not actually say as much. But it was clear that she was to be with them. And Ole thought this showed so much tact on Edward's part and was very grateful to him; indeed it quite decided him. Josephine was to be the clergyman's wife and manage everything in the house.

At last he agreed to all; it was decided that one was to be a clergyman and the other

a doctor, and they were to live together. The last thing they talked about was their fishing expeditions.

They heard sounds of tramping and talking; it was the men coming home from the herring-fishing. But they were very tired and soon fell asleep.

YOUTH

I.

FIRST COUPLE FORWARD

There was a party of young people collected together at a country house about five kilometres outside the town. The garden they were sitting in down by the cove was brightly coloured by their light summer clothes, especially those of the girls:

"Yellow, black, brown, white, Green, violet, blue,"

some self-coloured, others variegated, checks and stripes; felt hats, straw hats, tulle hats, caps, bare heads, parasols. A sound of singing rose harmoniously up out of this medley of colour; men's and women's voices in chorus floating in long undulating waves of sound. There was no conductor; a dark young girl in a brown checked dress lay in the midst of the group, leaning on one elbow, and led the singing with a soprano voice stronger and clearer than the others; and they followed her lead. They were in good practice. In the cove below them lay a freshly painted smack, with half rigged up new sails; the water calm as a mirror.

The singing and the smack seemed brightly to enter into league with each other down in that black-looking cove, overshadowed and shut in by the bleak mountains with still higher ones in the distance. The little cove was like a mountain lake, once caused by a flood but since forgotten. The mountains--oh, so heavy and stunted in outline as in colour, rugged and leaden-looking, the more distant ones blue-black,

with dirty snow on their peaks, monsters all of them.

The smack lay on the black water, ready for a dance; it belonged to a more light-hearted community than these lofty accessories of nature and human life. The smack and the singing protested against all overweening despotism, all that was rude, rough, and coarse--a free swaying protest, proudly delighting in their colours.

But the mountains took no notice of this protest, nor did the young people ever understand that it had been made. The "high-born" part of being born and bred in scenery like that of Norway's west country is just this, that nature forces one to make a stand, if one would not be utterly crushed and overwhelmed; either one must be beneath or above all! And they were above; for the west country folk are the brightest and cleverest of all Scandinavians. In so great a degree do they feel themselves masters of the situation as regards their scenery that not one of all these young people felt the mountains as heavy and cold in colour; all nature seemed to them fresh and strong, as nowhere else in the world.

But they who now sat there singing or listening only had not been born and nurtured by glad songs and the wide sea alone; no, they were children of the mountains too; children of them as well as of the songs and sea. Just before the song began they had been engaged in a discussion as sharp and cutting, as leaden-hued as any mountain. It was to do away with this stone-like sharpness among themselves that they had sent forth their melodious song, building long bridges of glorious harmony across the mountain-peaks and precipices. The summer day was slightly gray in itself; but occasionally (just as at that moment!) the sun shone forth over song and sail and landscape.

There sat two on whom both sun and song were wasted. Look at him down there, a little to the right, lying in the grass, leaning on his elbow; a tall young fellow in light summer clothes and without hat, a round closely-cropped head, short, broad forehead that looked like butting, a forehead that in his boyish days must have given

many a hard bang! Below the forehead was a nose like a beak, and sharp eyes that just then were slightly squinting; either the spectacles concealed it so as to make it hardly visible, or else it really was only very slight. The whole face had something severe about it, the mouth was pinched and hard and the chin sharp. But when one looked more closely into it the impression it gave one changed entirely; all that was so sharply cut became energetic rather than severe, and the spirit which had taken up its abode in this mountainous country could doubtless be both a friendly and a mischievous one. Even then, as he sat there in a towering rage, not caring a hang about either sunshine or song, he would rather have had a fight--even then gleams of merriment shot out from under the angry brows. It was clear that he was the conqueror.

If anyone doubted it they need only cast an eye over to the other side of the group on him who sat up against a tree to the left, a little higher up the bank. He was the picture of a wounded warrior, suffering, and with all the trembling uneasiness of battle still in his features. It was a long fair face, not a west country face, but belonging rather to the mountain districts or highlands; either he was a foreigner, or else he came of a race of immigrants; he was strikingly like the popular pictures of Melanchthon, though perhaps the eyes were a little more dreamy and the eyebrows a little more arched; altogether the likeness, particularly the forehead, position of the eyes, and the mouth, was so striking that among his fellow-students he always went by the name of Melanchthon.

This was Ole Tuft, student in theology, his studies nearly completed; and the other one, the conqueror with the eagle's beak (which just now had been hacking so sharply), was the friend of his childhood, Edward Kallem, medical student.

Several years ago their paths in life had begun to deviate, but so far there had never been any serious encounter between them; but now what had happened was to prove decisive.

Between these two, in the middle of the garden and surrounded by the singers, sat a tall girl in a plum-colored silk dress, round her neck some broad yellow lace which hung in long loose folds down to her waist. She herself was not singing; she was making a wreath out of a whole garden of field flowers and grass. One could easily see that she was sister to the conqueror, but with darker complexion and hair. The same shape of head, although her forehead was comparatively higher and the whole face larger, undoubtedly too large. The sharp family nose had a more gentle bend in her well-proportioned face; his thin lips became fuller, his chin more rounded, his uneven eyebrows more even, the eyes larger--and yet it was the same face. The expression of the two was different; hers, though not cold, was calm and silent; no one could quickly read those deep eyes; and yet the two expressions were much alike. Her head was well set on a strong-looking neck and well-shaped shoulders, the bust, too, was well developed. Her dark hair was twisted into a knot peculiar to herself. Her throat was bare, but the dress, with its yellow lace fastened closely round it--indeed, her whole attire gave one the idea of something shut in, buttoned up as it were; and so it was with her whole manner. As before said, she was making a wreath and looked neither at one or the other of the two who had been fighting.

The quarrel has been caused by a large black dog; it lay there now pretending to sleep, its thick wet coat glistening in the sun. Several of them had been throwing sticks into the water and sending the dog in after them; each time they threw a stick they shouted, "Samson! Samson!"--that was the dog's name. Edward Kallem said to two or three who stood near him, "Samson means sun-god."

"What?" asked one young girl, "does Samson mean sun-god?"

"Certainly it does; but of course the clergymen take care not to tell that." He said it in youthful exuberance, not in the least intending to hurt anyone's feelings, or to say more at all. But by chance Ole Tuft overheard him and said, with rather a superior air:

"Why should the clergymen not dare to tell the children that Samson means sun-god?"

"Why, for then the whole legend about him could no longer serve them as a type of the Christ-myth."

This last word was like a sharp stab, and it was meant as such. With a superior smile Ole said:

"I suppose Samson may be used as a type, whether he be called sun-god or not."

"Certainly, whether he be called sun-god or not, but suppose him to be sun-god?"

"Indeed, so he was sun-god?" shouted Ole, laughing.

"The name tells us so."

"The name? Are we bears or wolves because we are called after bears or wolves? Or gods because we are called after gods?"

Several of the party stood by listening; others joined them, Josephine among the number, and both turned at once to her.

"The misfortune is," said Edward, "that it is only the fact of his being a sun-god that gives any sense to the stories told about Samson."

"Oh, nowadays all old records of everybody's forefathers are turned into sun legends. And Ole related a few amusing parodies of this scientific craze now so much in vogue. They all laughed, Josephine too; Edward became excited at once and began to explain that our gods, who were Indian sun-gods, had in reality been turned into our forefathers when a new religion was started; the altars which then had been used for sacrifices were turned into graves or burying-places. In the same way all the old sun-gods of the Jews had been changed to forefathers when the worship of Jehovah did away with them as gods."

"Who can know that?"

"Know it? Why, take Samson! How utterly meaningless to believe that anyone's

strength should be in his hair! But as soon as we take it for granted that it is the sun's rays, lengthy in summer-time, but cut short in the lap of winter, then there is some sense in it. And when the rays grew longer and longer, and spring drew near, then all can understand that the sun-god could again encircle with his arms the pillars of the world. Never have bees been known to deposit their honey in a beast's carcase; but when we hear that each time the sun passes over one of the signs of the stars--for instance, the lion's--then it is said that the sun slaughtered the lion; then we can understand that the bees made their honey in the dead lion's carcase, that is to say, in the hottest part of the summer."

The whole party was all ears, and Josephine was highly astonished. She did not look up at her brother because she felt he was looking at her, but the impression made was unmistakable. What Edward had at first started, without other thought than that of showing off a little, was now a decided thing aimed at, and it was because Josephine stood between them.

"With the Egyptians," explained he, "the spring began when the sun slaughtered the lamb, that is to say, passed across the sign of the lamb--in their delight at the renewal of all things, every Egyptian slaughtered a lamb that day. The Jews have it from them. It is utterly false if the Jews later on have changed this to something that separates them from the Egyptians. Just as with the circumcision, they have that, too, from Egypt. But clergymen take care never to speak of that kind of thing."

Ole Tuft had little or no knowledge of all these things. His plodding studies had been severely theological, he had not time for more, and his faith was an inheritance from an old peasant race, and was far too secure in itself to be capable of scientific doubts. Had he announced this fact straight out, there would probably have been an end of the matter. But he too felt that Josephine stood between them and was allowing herself to be led away. So he began with great scorn to call everything vague inventions, empty devices, shining one day, melted away on the morrow.

The other's vanity would not stand this. "Theologians," cried he, "are wanting in the very simplest honesty. They conceal the fact that the most important items of their faith are not revealed to the Jews, but simply taken up and accepted from elsewhere! Like the creed of immortality, that is from Egypt. The same with the Commandments. No one climbs up on to a high mountain to have revealed to him in a thunderstorm what others have known for thousands of years. Where is the devil from? And the punishments of hell? Whence the last day and judgment? And the angels? The Jews knew nothing of all this. Clergymen are a set--in short, a set who do not honestly investigate matters, telling people such things."

Josephine subsided completely; all the young people, particularly the men, were evidently on Kallem's side; free-thinking was the fashion, and it was amusing to have a laugh at the old faith handed down from days of yore.

One young man began mocking at the history of the creation; Kallem possessed both geological and palæontological learning, and he made good use of it. Still less on this subject could Ole Tuft argue with them; he alluded again to a trial that had been made to reconcile the doctrines of the Bible with more recent discoveries, but it fared badly with him. And on they went in rapid succession from dogma to dogma--now they lay basking in the doctrine of the atonement of sins, it descended from so ancient and uncultured a time that such a thing as individual responsibility was not then known, merely that of the whole tribe or family. Tuft was in despair; to him it really was an important question, and much moved, in a loud voice, he began to confess his faith. As if that were of any use! Excuses! Inventions!--show us your proofs! Too late, Ole Tuft perceived that he had defended the cause too eagerly and had therefore lost all. He was overcome with grief, fought without hope, but fought on all the same and shouted out that, if a single one of all those truths seemed doubtful, the fault was his; he lacked the power to defend it. But the Word of God would stand unharmed to the last hour of the world! What is the Word of God? It is the spirit and entirety of the Bible, the creation (No!); the deluge (No! No!); the

expiation by death (No, No, No!); he shouted, they shouted; the tears rushed to Tuft's eyes, his voice shook; he looked pale and handsome.

Young people are not quite so cruel as children; but still it is the same kind of spirit. Some were sorry for him, others just wanted to drive him into a corner, Edward Kallem first and foremost.

But Josephine stepped quickly away to the dark girl with the soprano voice. She began one of their songs directly, the others joined in, the gentlemen rather after the ladies. With very few exceptions, the party consisted of a chorus of ladies and gentlemen who had practised together the last three winters with all the perseverance and industry only to be met with in a small town.

Josephine went and sat down in the middle of the bank, the others round about her. She did not sing; she had her flowers.

The party had come out there in the little schooner which now lay so fresh and bright-looking in the sun. On board, Josephine, Edward, and Ole had sat together, close together, for there was not much room. No one could guess, hearing their merry, oft-whispered conversation, that there was aught between them save friendship and goodwill. And now, only three hours after, Ole Tuft sat there like an outcast! How he suffered! An attack on his calling, on his faith, and before them all! And by Edward, too! So cruel, so persistingly scornful! And Josephine? Not a single word of sympathy, not even a look from Josephine.

From their childhood Ole and she had been constantly together; they had written to each other when he was away at Christiania, he once a fortnight, she as often as she had anything to write about. When he was at home for his holidays they met daily. During the two years that she was at a French school and away in Spain their correspondence had been more active than ever, on her part, too, and when she came home again--changed though she was otherwise--to him she was always the same. Her father had helped him with his studies and enabled him to give all his attention

to them; he was to pass his last examination at Christmas; everyone prophesied that it would be one of the first and best ever passed in theology. Undoubtedly he had her, and possibly her brother too, to thank for his having been helped. In former days they had both of them brought him to their father, to the head-master, to the apothecary, and to many other families; and now through her he was accepted everywhere. In everyday life she spoke but little, and was often rather difficult to get on with; but she was a firm and true friend. At times she would censure him (for he was not always according to her taste); it was all part of their intercourse and he did not attach much importance to it, nor she either; from the very first she had always been his guardian. As yet he had not dared to say that he loved her; there was no necessity for it, and, in fact, it was almost too sacred to be mentioned. He was as sure of her as of his own faith. He was a peasant, his chief characteristic was a certain trustful, solid collectiveness. God provided for his faith; his well-being and future were provided for--of course also by God; but through Josephine. In his eyes she was the cleverest, most beautiful and healthiest girl not only in the town but in the whole country, and she was very rich. This last must be taken into consideration too; as a small boy he had been an ambitious dreamer, but now his dreams had a different bent.

His fellow-students knew all about it; as well as Melancthon, they called him the "bishop-theme from the bay," or the "bay bishop." He had got accustomed to this, it was almost a necessity for him; there was something child-like in his smiling trustfulness that suited him well; then he was so handsome, with his fair, open face; and when that is the case it is quite excusable to be ambitious.

Now he felt that he had been hurled down from his secure and pleasant height! Anyone who having been safe and secure, for the first time is thoroughly defeated, feels so completely out of it all. The worst of this was that Josephine did not appear to wish to have anything to do with him; he looked repeatedly across to her, but she went on arranging her flowers and grass just as if he did not exist.

At last it was exactly as though they all had glided away and he too were no longer there. He sat without seeming to sit, heard without hearing, saw without seeing. The supper was being got ready up before the house; they all went up there as soon as the table was laid; they ate, they drank, they laughed and made merry; but he was not with them, he stood there staring out across the bay--far, far away. A young man, clerk in some business, spoke to him about the routes of the different steamers and how badly they were managed; a girl with crooked teeth, red hair in plaits and a freckled face (he had formerly been her master), assured him that sailors were by no means so well educated as one might expect from people who travelled so much. The hostess came and asked how it was he would not eat anything, and the host took wine with him; in doing so they showed him the usual respect; but both of them cast a hurried, searching glance at his eyes, which made him tremble. He felt they doubted. In his ceaseless and ever-increasing pain, he saw nothing but doubt and scorn on every side, even in the fact of the general merriment. Edward Kallem was especially full of fun and they all collected round him. It was in his honor too (he had come home a fortnight ago) that the expedition had been got up. As in a dream, Ole saw that Josephine's flowers had been placed on the table, and he heard how everyone praised the blending of their colors; she herself was sitting at a little stone table with two girl friends--was that to prevent his joining her? There was much noise and fun going on at the other side. He saw her talking and laughing, all the young men waiting upon her; Edward joined them several times; he made them laugh too. Ole noticed all this with a strange feeling of fear. The noise jarred on him, the laughter made him feel ashamed, he could not swallow a morsel, and the wine had a bad taste; everyone seemed as though they were worked by machinery, the house, the bay, the schooner, the mountains, all seemed so overwhelmingly near.

A dead calm had set in, so that the whole party were obliged to walk back to town. They started on their walk singing and all together; but almost immediately some of the numerous summer visitors came pouring out from the houses along the road,

and, as they were all acquaintances, they stopped to speak. The newcomers joined them and walked on with them; then came others, and each time they stopped, and each time the party broke up and became more divided. In that way Ole was able to keep behind without anyone's noticing it. He could not bear their company and their merriment any longer.

Now it was that everything was, as it were, concentrated in Josephine. The being attacked and overthrown by Edward, the shame of this defeat, his wounded religious feelings ... it all was due to the fact that she had not upheld him, neither by word nor by look; had shunned him before, and now had gone and left him! He could not stand that; for she had grown to be so much, too much, for him, he knew it and was not ashamed. That which once had been his highest aim, namely, to be a missionary, had fallen from him like scales, when he saw she no longer cared about it. Whenever his mother had said that he should never become a missionary, his answer was that God must be obeyed before man. But when Josephine, in her strong sort of way, had looked closer into the reality of things, he gave up all his wishes without her needing even to say a word on the subject. He said to himself that he would surely be punished for having so great a love for any one person. But he could not help it.

With these and thousands of similar thoughts in his mind, he lagged behind, and turned off from the road up into the wood; there he lay down, waiting until their summer acquaintances should pass back again. He soon turned over, and lay with his face downwards, the cool blades of grass prickling both cheeks and forehead, and the half-wet earth he seemed to inhale suited his mood. All these tiny blades of grass were as nothing in the shade; and so it was with him--through her he reached the sunny side of life, without her all was shadow.

A voice within him seemed to say her brother had taken her from him.

Her brother, who, until a very few days ago, had not cared a straw about her, whilst Ole had always been with her since they were children together, had rowed with her,

read to her, been to her both brother and sister in one, and had faithfully written to her when they were separated; her own brother had never done any one of all these things. Even his defeat of to-day he credited to her account; for if he had not, for her sake, been so conscientious in working for his examination, to which he had been assisted by her father, then he would probably have known more about all those matters under discussion to-day--he would perhaps not have been defeated at all; this, too, he suffered for the sake of his fidelity.

As long as Josephine was a child and half grown up, Edward had seldom been together with her without teasing her. She was very thin, with large, black eyes, often uncombed hair, red hands, altogether scraggy; he nicknamed her "the duckling," and once when she had hurt her foot and went about limping, "the lame duckling."

He could never really make her out, she was so defiant, and yet shy--kept always at a distance. And then, time upon time, she was the cause of his getting a beating. She considered it "just" to tell each time he did anything wrong. And if he beat her for telling, then it was "just" to tell about that too. He took a dislike to her. Soon, however, they were separated, through his leaving his father's house. After that unlucky day, when father and son met on the road to Store-Tuft, the apothecary took pity on his old friend and, taking the boy from him, adopted him entirely as his own son. What the father had never been able to succeed in succeeded now. The boy was at once taken away from school, and allowed to devote himself to his chief interest, natural history. Chemical and physical analysis or botanical expeditions were his highest aim, and for two years he studied nothing but what belonged to those branches. After that he went through other necessary studies with a private master, and very quickly; he began his medical studies after passing his second examination. As long as he was at home he only saw his sister when she came across to the apothecary's to see him, and, as their interests were entirely opposed, their intercourse became almost nil. Later on, the apothecary used to take him abroad

with him in the holidays; Edward was so clever at languages, which he certainly was not. It was not often, therefore, that the brother and sister met in their holiday time. But from the time that, as a student, he had first travelled abroad with the apothecary, and she saw her brother come home, grown-up, with new fashions, both in ideas and in dress, energetic, full of life, a very ideal, especially a woman's ideal of youth, from that time she had always secretly admired him. He, for his part, either overlooked her completely, or else teased her; it cost her many an hour's torture, but she swallowed it all, so as to be allowed to be where he was, even if only quietly in a corner.

Ole understood her, though she never betrayed herself. To him, too, she spoke seldom of Edward without calling him "disgusting," "meddlesome," "chatterbox," etc., etc. But Ole's faithful attention to her every time she sat there neglected by her brother, and with wounded feelings heaped up "treasures" for him in her heart.

A great change had taken place in Edward--his inquisitiveness had become a desire for knowledge, his restlessness was now energy. But at the same time his sister also underwent a change to an extent that he knew nothing about. It was exactly two years and a half since he had seen her last; she had been in France and Spain for two years, and in the last holidays, when she was at home, he had been away travelling in England with the apothecary; this year, too, they had been away for a couple of months. This sister whom he now met again was like a stranger to him. He was much taken up with her after their first meeting.

She was not handsome, he told Ole, as soon as they two met (to Ole's greatest astonishment). But he never wearied talking of the new and peculiar sort of impression she produced up here among all the others. Their mother must surely have looked too much at some Spanish woman during the time before Josephine's birth. If it had not been for that indescribable something about the eyes which distinguishes one person from the other all the world over--if it had not been for that

something about the eyes--she might very well have lived among Spaniards and been taken for their countrywoman. The effect of this in a Norwegian household may be imagined! She talked well, rapidly, and to the point; but, all the same, was rather silent--kept herself at a distance. She dressed conspicuously, liked bright colors, and was always in the height of fashion, thereby almost challenging people, but in all other respects she was timid and shy.

From this time Edward really became a brother to her. Their father was away, and during his absence she lived at the head-master's and was not always easily got at; but whenever it was possible they were together. She had a feeling that he wanted to study her thoroughly, so she was on her guard; but it flattered her greatly that, whenever there was anyone present, his eyes always sought hers and he appealed to her in everything.

While Ole, in deep distress, pressed his face down in the grass in the little wood where he lay, he could see in his mind's eye Josephine at a ball, her brother dancing first with this one, then with the other--sometimes even several dances with the same partner, but with her only one little "turn," out of compassion.

But now?

Now she had become a precious sister to Edward, and she and Ole were to be separated.

Why should Edward break in upon and spoil their intercourse, he who knew so little about it?--taking to himself all manner of rights which he did not in the least deserve? Just after being together for a few days, was he to decide who was suitable for her to be with, and who was not?

Why, before them all, had he thus attacked him, casting scorn and derision on his calling in life?--not only mocking him, but mocking God himself.

As this thought passed through Ole Tuft's mind, a strange and strong light seemed to rise up and spread over all the mountains far away on the other side of the bay. He

felt it in the back of his neck as he lay there with his face buried in the grass. Then there seemed to come a whisper from over there, filling all the air around him, "What hast thou done with me?"

Oh! how crushed he felt, he seemed forced down into the ground. Now he knew that his suffering was like a sharp razor cutting away all that was diseased out of his flesh. He had lost his cause to-day simply because he stood there as a liar. "Thou shalt have no other gods but me!" No, no, forgive me, spare me! "Thou with thy vain, sensual dreams! Let the night serve thee as it did Jacob, to wrestle with me, writhing worm that thou art!"

The air around him seemed full of the sound of a thousand wings.

It was not the first time that the solemnity of the Old Testament had come upon him from the heights and taken root in him. These questions of great or small; as to whether he should hazard "the greatest"--or be contented, like everyone else, with mediocrity--this was nothing new to him.

But were he to meet Josephine in good humor again, those questions would cease to exist, with one stroke of her hand she made them vanish. And such was the case now. Without any warning, it was as if a fresh protest from her came and overwhelmed him. Josephine would never have turned from him to-day because her brother wished it, never! And if she had understood it in that way, she would have done just the opposite. No, she turned from him because he was such a poor creature--for nothing else. Perhaps, too, because she did not wish to be forced into a discussion, she was so very shy. Neither had she turned to her brother. She sat in the middle of the group in the garden, and later on, when they dined, she and a couple of girl friends had been at a separate table. And when the party broke up she had made no effort to be where her brother collected so many round him--why, in the world, had he not thought of that before? She was true to him; upon my word, she was true and faithful! He rose up; why, in the name of fortune, had he not seen that sooner?

He had wished that she would help him one way or another--at least, would comfort him and show him how sorry she was for him. But all that sort of thing was utterly opposed to Josephine's nature. How could he even think of it? Especially as there had been all this disturbance and everyone was on the lookout as to what she would do.

He had been a great stupid. Delighted with this discovery, he hopped down through the wood and across the ditch, on his homeward way, after the others.

Great heavens, how he loved her! He saw her before him as she was sometimes when she thought him too child-like; through all her majesty he could always catch a good, kind look from her!

The late sunset left no red sky behind, the night was dull and gray, a deserted road winding down hill; by the roadside were some small factories, the houses being up on the hill, poor places all of them, and a few shabby-looking summer villas here and there, low trees, and a few bushes spread about.

He saw it all without seeing it, occupied as he was with his own thoughts. Not a soul on the road--yes, far off in the distance was a solitary individual going toward the town. He slackened his pace so as not to overtake this person, and never noticed that besides that person walking in front of him was another advancing to meet him. At last he could distinguish one from the other. Surely--it could never be--was he mistaken? No, he recognized the hat, and then the walk, the whole figure, there was only one such! Josephine was coming back to fetch him! It was just like her.

"But where have you been?" said she. Her large-featured face was flushed, her breath came quickly, her voice was rather hesitating, and the parasol she held in her left hand was not altogether steady. He did not answer; he gazed at her face, her dress, the feather in her hat, her tall, fine figure, till involuntarily she smiled; so much dumb admiration and gratitude would pierce through any kind of armor. "Josephine! Oh, Josephine!" Joy and admiration were reflected from the crown of

his flat hat and down to his very boots. She went gaily up to him and laid her right hand on his left arm, pushing him gently forward; he was to walk on.

His face was all stained by the grass he had been burrowing in, she thought he had been crying: "You are silly, Ole," she whispered.

Such a gray summer's night, when nothing really sleeps nor yet is fully awake, gives one a strange, unsatisfied feeling. For these two it was as would be a dimly lighted room for two who were secretly engaged. She allowed her hand to remain resting on his arm, and when his eyes met hers she looked at him as though watching over a child.

"You see, I thought," said he, "I thought, only fancy I thought--" The tears stood in his eyes.

"You are very silly, Ole," whispered she again! And thus ended the storm of that day.

Her hand still rested on his arm; it looked as if she were leading him to prison. He could only just feel a very slight pressure, but it went to his very marrow. Now and then her silk dress just touched his leg, they were keeping step together, he seemed carried along by the electric current of her vicinity. They were utterly alone, and the silence round them was complete; they could hear their own steps and the rustling of the silk dress. He kept the arm on which her hand lay, painfully quiet, half afraid that the hand might fall down and be broken. There was just this one drawback--for there must always be something not quite perfect, that he felt an ever-increasing guilty desire to take her hand and tuck it under his arm in the usual way; he could have pressed it then. But he dared not do it.

They walked on and on. He looked upward and discovered there was no moon. "There is no moon," said he.

"It would have been lighter if there had been," answered she, smiling. "Much lighter." Their voices had met and the sound of them mingled, floating together like

birds in the air.

But just on that account they found it difficult to say more. As Ole walked along pondering over what he could venture to say next, he felt both touched and proud. He thought of that snowy Saturday evening long ago, when the other boys at school had treated him so badly, and he had fled away to Store-Tuft; he thought of all his misery that day; but his promotion as it were dated from then, he had walked into the town from the other side, but with her on his arm--stop though, not quite. There had been the same drawback then too.

Should he tell her? Would she not think it too outspoken.

"We are quite alone now, we too," thus cunningly would he try to lead up to it; but he could not depend on his voice, it would betray him. She did not answer him. Again there was a complete silence between them. Just fancy, then her hand of its own accord slipped quietly into his arm, in the usual way when two people are engaged. His whole frame quivered, and taking courage, he pressed it slightly; but did not dare to look at her. They walked on.

Soon the town lay before them as though under a veil, the ships' rigging rising up like so many towers; or like the pointed sort of rigging dredging ships always have; the houses stood in thick outline, no coloring visible; everything carefully packed up and put away, the mountains keeping guard over the whole. One long, faint, indistinct sound, a dull gleam through the dead-gray silence. "Will you not tell me something?" said she, rapidly, as though she could not possibly get out more just then. He felt quite relieved at this, and asked her if he should tell her--about light.

"Yes, about light," answered she; was it ironical?

He began, but could not do it clearly. The very first time that she asked him for a clearer explanation he felt that he could not give it, he was not sufficiently at home with the subject. "No," he said, "let me finish my story about Jeanne d'Arc; you know we were interrupted yesterday."

"Yes, let us take Jeanne d'Arc!" said she, merrily, and laughed.

"Do you not wish that?"

"Yes, yes!" And she said that more kindly, as if wishing to make up for the first. Then he told her the end of Jeanne d'Arc's story, as it was told in a newly published book which he had borrowed from her father in the holidays. This was a subject that suited him; his west country accent, with the sing-song rise and fall in the voice, his carefully studied use of words, peculiar to one who had once been a peasant, heightened by the country dialect, though it no longer was so noticeable, impressed one with the idea that it was the words of some old writer; his soft and gentle Melancthon-face was dreamy; she looked up at him, and each time seemed to see deep down into his pure heart.

And in this manner they reached the town. The story had taken a hold on her too, and they both became so eager that they were not aware that they might possibly meet someone, and that they now had houses on each side of them; he just lowered his voice a little, but went on telling his story.

But when they came near the street where his aunt lived, and up which he ought to turn, he stopped, without having finished his story. Would he be allowed to take her home? The head-master's house was a little further on; if not, then he ought to leave her here. Now, this was not a question of this evening only.

Just on this account she thought of it too; she had never approved of that sort of nonsense, of being taken to one's own door when the other person's way lay quite in an opposite direction. From their childhood she had always had the same feeling, because she had been teased about him. But she knew that for him it was a great treat.

They both walked along the short bit of road that remained, and worked themselves up to a state of excitement. Shall we say good-by here, or--? What had originally been so childish had now grown, by dint of repetition, to something of great

importance. She could not account for it, but as they stood at the cross-roads, she quietly took her gloveless hand from his arm and offered it to him in farewell greeting. She saw his disappointment. And to make up for it her large eyes beamed on him, her hand grasped his heartily, and, "Thanks for a pleasant evening!" said she, in quite a different tone of voice from what she had used for the last few years. The words seemed to fly from heart to heart like a life-long promise, and such was their meaning. She thanked him now and always for his faithful love. He stood there, quite pale. She saw it, and seemed to meditate something--took her hand away, and went. On the hill, she turned again to look at him, thankful that neither by word nor deed had he tried to do anything but what she wished. She nodded to him, he raised his hat.

A few minutes later she stood in her own room, much too warm and too wide-awake to think of going to bed. She did not wish to sleep; at all events, she wanted first to see the sun on the roofs, or at least daylight. Her room looked out on the courtyard, the playground and gymnasium at the end, some gymnastic apparatus stood outside too. Looked at from the street side, her bed-room was in the second story, but seen from the court it was on the first floor; hundreds of times, as a child, she had jumped out of the window instead of going out through the door. She opened the window, and even thought of jumping out now and walking up and down the court. She would, in reality, have preferred walking about the whole night with Ole; but he could not understand that. Perhaps it was because he had not proposed it that she had dismissed him up the street.

But as she thought more about it, she did not dare to venture out into the yard. It happened sometimes that young men coming home from a country walk or a boating expedition, or jaunt of some kind, would take it into their heads, as they passed the old school-yard, to turn into the playground of their boyish days and have a swing on the ropes; she would not like to meet those half-tipsy young men. She took off her hat, and remained standing in the window, leaning forward, gazing out after

what had just happened, and which seemed to draw her outward in spite of herself.

She heard steps on the stairs outside, and then in the sand, the way in to her. Could it be Ole? Was he sentimental enough to wish to look up at her window? He must not come! God help him if he did come! She listened eagerly; no--those steps were too rapid; it was--she knew it as he stood there, it was her brother.

Yes, it was Edward who came. He was not astonished at seeing her, but came straight up to her. And when he had come up to the open window he stretched up his right hand to her, and she took it. His eyes squinted a little, a sure sign that he was excited. "I am glad you are still up; otherwise I should have been obliged to knock." His eyes looked searchingly into hers, and he did not loose her hand. "Have you just got back?"

"Yes, just this moment." All at once she felt herself to be in his power; he might have questioned her about anything in the world and she would have answered, with those eyes of his looking at her like that.

"When I saw you were no longer with the rest of the party, I knew you had gone back to Ole."

"Yes."

He stopped speaking, his voice shook: "I behaved badly; I suppose now you are engaged?"

There was a pause, but her answer gleamed forth directly in her eyes. "I think so," she said.

Lovingly, yet full of grief, he gazed at her. She felt the greatest desire to cry aloud. Had she done wrong? She was dreadfully alarmed. Then he took her head between both his hands, and bending down, kissed her on the forehead. She burst into tears and clasped her arms tightly round his neck; they lay thus cheek against cheek.

"Well, well--if it is settled, then--I congratulate you, Josephine, dear Josephine."

They pressed closer to each other, then they parted.

"I leave to-day," whispered he, taking hold of her hand; she gave them both to him.

"To-day, Edward?"

"I have behaved stupidly. Good-by, Josephine."

She disengaged her hands to take her handkerchief and press it to her face. "I will come and say good-by," she sobbed.

"Don't do that! No--not again!" And to get it over quickly, he embraced and kissed her once more and left her without once looking round.

II.

NEXT COUPLE FORWARD.

In March of the following year, just as Edward Kallem was preparing to pass the second part of his medical examination, he came across something else which completely occupied his thoughts.

We must now tell all about it.

At the time when his desultory studies in natural history concentrated themselves more and more on physiology, at that time the cleverest physiologist was a young realistic student, Thomas Rendalen, somewhat older than Edward Kallem. In itself, it was seldom that a non medical student distinguished himself in that branch, so that everybody was struck by it, and of course Edward Kallem too; but he did not on that account become any closer acquainted with Rendalen, who was not one of those who make themselves accessible to all.

It was later on, indeed not until after New Year (as they happened to be on the same steamer coming back after the Christmas holidays), that they got to know each other better. The first evening that Kallem went to see Thomas Rendalen in his own rooms, he stayed the night there. And a few evenings after, when Rendalen came to

him, they kept going backward and forward between the two lodgings (which were close together) till between three and four o'clock in the morning. Edward Kallem had never before come across such a genial sort of fellow, and Rendalen went up to him early one morning, before Kallem had gone out to the hospital, just to tell him that of all his friends and acquaintances Kallem was the one he liked best.

In reality Rendalen's was a stronger nature than Kallem's, a mixture of savagery and tameness, of passion, melancholy, and music, with great powers of communicativeness, but with recesses in his character which were seldom, if ever, opened. Unbounded energy--and then again so utterly devoid of power that he could do nothing; the whole machinery was out of order, as though one of the wheels were broken. Not a single spot at right angles, nothing but irregularities on the whole landscape of his character; but the light of a great mind was over the whole. However incalculable were the surroundings, or unpleasant the disappointments--his individuality, with its strict sense of justice, was so winning that one could not do otherwise than be fond of him.

His chief concern was for all belonging to schools, and for education to its very centre; to carry each separate child safe through the "dangerous age" which comes at different times. Many suffered greatly at that time, wounds were made but not easily healed; those who lived comfortably and in better circumstances could pass the ordeal unhurt; but they were hardly in the majority. All education and teaching was to be concentrated in forming a good and moral man, that was his first and last thought.

He was indefatigable in lecturing on ways and means of education; in discussing all school arrangements and the work to be done in the homes. His mother owned a widely-known girls' school in one of the towns on the coast, and he was anxious to take possession of it so as to be able to carry out his plans! His great aim was a system of mixed schools; but first the teaching of all the principal branches must

undergo a change--be made easier, not suitable only for the most talented pupils. And he intended practising all this at the girls' school.

He possessed a tolerably large collection of school material from America and from several European countries, and he kept on adding to it; besides that, he owned a whole library of school literature. He lived together with one Vangen, a student of theology who had finished his studies at Christmas, but was just going up for his practical examination; but although between them they had three rooms, they were all three full of Rendalen's library and collections.

His appearance was remarkable. Red-haired (but rather a light color) and the ends sticking up straight in the air, freckled, and with blinking gray eyes under white short-haired eyebrows which were hardly visible; the nose was broad and rather turned up, the mouth pinched; short, freckled hands, every finger denoting energy; not tall, but splendidly made; his walk, on well turned out feet, was very light. Wherever he went he was the best of all gymnasts, and could climb the ropes like none other; Edward, too, who had always been fond of gymnastics, became doubly eager through his example; for nothing could equal Rendalen's power to win others for whatever he was fond of. At this time his great passion was walking on his hands; Kallem could do this to his great admiration; probably that put the climax to the respect that Rendalen had for him.

They had many subjects in common; they were both specialists, and both powerful in whatever they undertook; modern in their way of thinking, and with the courage of reformers; both were particular to the last degree about their persons; they dressed with taste; Rendalen, however, thought rather too much about it. Both had the same quick way of thinking, guessing in advance the half of what was said; both in that way perfecting each other's knowledge! Rendalen was musical, played the piano in a most masterly way, and sang well. Kallem sang still better, and was encouraged in it by Rendalen.

Although Rendalen could with heart and soul give himself up to one single object or individual, still there was a reserve about him which no one could penetrate. He was very fond of Vangen, his adopted brother; but one could always see that there was a decided something that kept them apart. In this respect Kallem was entirely to Rendalen's satisfaction; he too, in the midst of all his devotion to anyone, had the same kind of stand-offishness about him.

But there was difference enough between them both to keep up the novelty of their intercourse, at the same time rendering it rather difficult. Nearly all the difficulties proceeded from Rendalen, for Kallem was more pliable and accommodating. When Rendalen was in the humor, he would play by the hour together, just as though no one were in the room; one might make up one's mind to go away at once. He it was who always gave the keynote to all their moods. He was capricious and could have long spells of melancholy; when one of these fits was on him few could get a word out of him. There was a marvellous power of work in him whenever he was taken up about anything that occupied his mind--and then suddenly, good-by to the whole thing! Were he in a communicative mood and really in good spirits, the very air around him seemed sparkling with electricity.

For Kallem the study of medicine meant fresh discoveries daily, and on account of their mutual physiological studies they both faithfully interchanged ideas, each from his side. During the months of January and February they met nearly every evening; at any rate, at the gymnasium from six to seven o'clock; after that they would often sup together--oftenest at Rendalen's rooms, as he had a piano.

In the early part of March Rendalen's mother came to pay him a visit; she lodged with her son's landlord, a new-comer to the town. He was a native of Norland, blind and paralysed down one side, and had an excessively musical wife; she was very young, in fact almost a child--the strangest couple imaginable. Rendalen often spoke of them. As long as his friend's mother was in town, Kallem kept away; each time

they left the gymnasium, Kallem could see that Rendalen did not wish to have him with him. But when, after a stay of eight days or so, the mother went home again, still things did not change; either Rendalen went on with his gymnastics longer than Kallem, or else he left after a very few exercises; it was clear that he did not wish for Kallem's company. The latter thought that he was in one of his melancholy moods.

But one morning, Kallem having come home earlier than usual (as a rule he was out the whole forenoon), he heard the bell ring, the servant open the door, and then Rendalen's footstep in the passage. He came in hurriedly, was gloomy and taciturn; his business was--should they change lodgings?

Kallem knew him so well now, and was so good-natured, that he did not show the least surprise, and never even asked his reasons for wishing to change; he only said that his two small rooms would surely not be large enough for Rendalen's collections and his piano--and for Vangen? Or, were he and Vangen no longer going to live together? Yes, they were! But there was a large room adjoining Kallem's two rooms, and for long Rendalen had had his eye on that. He knew the landlady would be glad to let it. It would suit him perfectly. Only fancy what it would be to play in that large room!

"Have you spoken now to the landlady about it?"

"No, but I am just going to her," and off he rushed. They both came back together, the landlady and he; a few minutes after, all was settled! In the afternoon they moved! When the good-natured Vangen came hurrying home from his dinner, there sat Kallem in dressing-gown and slippers in the first room to the right, and announced to him that Rendalen had gone to live in Sehested Street, where he, Kallem, used to live; they had changed lodgings. They both laughed.

"And yet he was very comfortable here," said Vangen; but that was the only remark he made.

Of course Edward Kallem speculated much on the reason of this hurried move, and

thought he would have a good talk with the servant each time she came to see to the stove or to bring in his lunch or supper, both which meals he took at home; she looked as if she knew something. Marie had a peculiar smile that seemed to say: "Oh, I know the lot of you--you too, you rogue." He got that, the very first time she opened the door for him. She had eyes that were more than half covered by the lids which hung over them in folds. The nose was a turn-up and seemed to drag the mouth upward into a stiff smile, the upper lip projected, showing a row of teeth for which there was hardly room, they glistened through each smile. Everything she said seemed to have a hidden meaning of fun and nonsense, it shot forth from under her eyelids and played about the corners of the mouth. The voice was a soft one. Otherwise a steady girl, well made, clever as old Nick himself, but prudent and cautious both in speech and ways, for all her laughing criticisms. But her laugh seemed always on the lookout for one. When he said: "I am Edward Kallem, I am to live in Rendalen's room," she answered, smilingly: "Oh!" just as if she had known all his secrets from the time he was a boy. If he mentioned Rendalen, she looked as if she had a whole room full of jokes about him; and yet--he never got anything out of her.

The house where he lived now was a corner house, almost opposite the university. The door of the house was in the same street into which Kallem's rooms looked too. They were on the second floor and had the same entrance as his landlord had; that is to say, one of the rooms--the other one, his bed-room, had its own private entrance. Rendalen had had a third room, the corner room further in. Kallem put his card on the door leading into the little hall, below a large door-plate bearing the name of Sören Kule; that was the landlord's name! Next day being Sunday, he went to call on him.

There sat the paralysed, blind man in a large roller-chair. The unfortunate man was still young, barely over thirty, very heavily built, and heavy both in face and in speech. His very "Come in!" when Kallem knocked, was heavy. Kallem introduced

himself, the other sat immovable and answered slowly: "Indeed, I am blind. And I can't move about much either." This was said with a Norland accent; each syllable jerked out and jogging heavily along like a London brewer's dray-horse. It was a clever, but full, large-featured face; he came probably of a healthy race. Kallem was sufficiently a doctor to be able to see at once why he was paralysed and blind. A quantity of engravings and photographs from Spain, hanging on the walls, gave him the idea that it was probably there he had received as a gift what that most gallant people distribute with such hospitality.

"Won't you sit down?" he said, at last. His healthy side brisked up as he turned and looked toward a door to the left: "Ragni!" he called. Nobody answered and nobody came. His voice, as well as his seeming indifference and stolid quiet, seemed to make the silence duller. Kallem sat there and looked about him. Were those children's toys? It seemed to him surely he heard children's voices? Were there children here?

"Ragni!" repeated he once more, slowly. Then, more gently: "Perhaps they are in the kitchen busy with the dinner."

Again the same dull, heavy silence; the sound of bells from the street broke through it for a moment, but only to make it all the more evident afterward. The furniture was too heavy and dark for a small Norwegian room in winter; and it was faded and worn. The engravings and photographs were in large frames, which, however, did not fit very well, so that both dust and damp had got in and spoilt the paper. The children's toys and a piano were the most noticeable things; the piano seemed to be perfectly new and by one of the best Parisian makers, it was certainly a concert-grand. "Your wife plays so beautifully?"

"Yes."

Kallem knew that she had devoted herself to the study of music since she was a child, and just to find something to talk about he took up the subject. "She has

studied at the conservatoire in Berlin?"

"Yes."

There was a noise of chairs being pushed about in the room to the right, the one adjoining the corner room. Kallem then took that up as a subject for conversation. "I hear I am to have a neighbor in the corner room?"

"Yes."

"A relation of yours, I believe?"

"Yes, an aunt."

Again Sören Kule looked to the left, and called out in an indifferent sort of way: "Ragni!" Nobody answered and nobody came. "I fancied I heard a door open outside," he said, as though apologizing for having called. Kallem got up then and said good-by.

A few days afterward he gave Rendalen an amusing description of his visit. Rendalen laughed; he had not often been there himself; but had heard much about Sören Kule. He declared the fellow might go to the devil for him, he would rather not talk about him at all; he sat down to the piano and began to play.

A few days later, who should Kallem meet in the entrance but his brother-in-law in spe, Mr. Ole Tuft, now candidate in theology, come to town to pass his so-called practical examination.

Grand meeting and recognition! The one had no idea of the change of lodgings that had taken place, nor the other that Ole Tuft had come to town. Kallem begged him to go in with him, and heard then that Tuft was there for the first time; the landlord's aunt had moved in yesterday, and it was her Ole had been visiting. Edward Kallem understood at once what community she belonged to, and he changed the subject. He asked further whether he knew Sören Kule? No, only through hearing of him from his aunt; all the family were from the Norland. Then who was Sören Kule? He

was a well-to-do fish-dealer who became blind and partially paralysed; was obliged to sell his business and had bought this house in Christiania to make a living by it and by other things as well. They had several relations in town, and had only been there since October. Did Ole Tuft know what had caused his paralysis and blindness? No. Kallem told him there could hardly be a doubt on the matter. Ole Tuft was quite shocked.

"How could he dare marry then? And twice."

"Has he been married twice?"

"Yes, he married a second time about six months or a year ago--his late wife's sister."

"Then the children are by the first wife?"

"Yes. But the present wife is hardly more than a child herself; just fancy, she is eighteen and has been married nearly a year!"

"Was he like this when he married again?"

"No, I think not. He was in ill-health but not so bad as now. There are not many who can understand how it came about?"

"Have you seen her?"

"No, but my aunt says she is a delicate little creature, and very musical. She has played in public."

"Indeed, up in the north?"

"They are said to be so very critical up there." Then he began again on the subject of the marriage. "The parents probably arranged it for the children's sake."

Kallem very nearly answered, "Then, of course, they are clergy folk;" but he recollected in time. He only said: "One can't accuse her of being too particular."

They conversed a little on indifferent subjects; no mention was made of Josephine. Shortly after Ole went in to find his aunt, whom he had come to call upon. As it

happened Kallem was at home that forenoon and he heard the landlord's wife play. She began with scales and scales and still more scales; but then came a piece so wonderfully well executed that he set his door ajar so as to hear better. Her playing was more like singing. How in all the world could a woman young like she, and full of artistic and lyric feeling, marry such a mass of corruption? Here was a problem which he would have had Rendalen solve, but Rendalen knew nothing. However, he was in good spirits that day, spoke in raptures about her playing; there was not so much power in it but it was full of song, and a poetical charm of coloring which was unequalled. He could play a Russian piece of her's, "after a fashion" he added; he played it perfectly. Kallem wanted to know something about her appearance.

"She looks--stupid!" cried he. "God forgive me for saying it--stupid! Her forehead might possibly save her, but she hides it entirely with her hair. I said so to her; 'Up with your hair,' said I. Her eyes, too, might save her. But never in my life have I seen anyone so shy about her eyes."

"Has she good eyes?"

"Good heavens, her eyes are of the many-voiced kind! Some eyes sing as it were in unison or at the most for two voices; but some there are that send forth chords of bright harmony. If she looks up when she is playing you will feel it! But generally her eyes are on a level with the feet of the table, or piercing holes in the corners, or setting the stove alight. Sometimes, though, they dash up high along the walls like a rat that cannot escape!" He was amused at his own description and began to play a Halling.[2] "Wonderful that such a musical nature can--come, we must not be sentimental, old fellow!" He intended going to the theatre and took Kallem with him.

A week passed and still Kallem had not seen her, although he had tried what he could to bring it about. But he was out at a dance one night--the son of the house was a fellow-student of his--the latter came up to him whilst a "tour d'inclination"

was going on, bringing two ladies with him, and asked Kallem whether he would choose the "kernel of a nut" or a "dog-rose?" This was not particularly clever, but he chose the "dog-rose." This "dog-rose" had a musical forehead and prettily arched eyebrows; otherwise she was silent and insignificant. Rather tall, with sloping shoulders, pretty arms, not actually fat but well-shaped; the same might be said of her whole person. She danced well, but seemed as if she wished to get away from him as quickly as possible; he brought her back to her place without her having so much as looked at him. He was much surprised therefore when she came and fetched him out in the next "tour." Probably she only knew very few people and those few were very likely engaged. She looked about her shyly and then came forward with timid steps and curtsied; still she did not look up, she seemed positively afraid, and so it struck him he would be kind and sit down beside her. But whatever he said to her she never answered anything but "yes," "no," "indeed," "perhaps," which soon proved too much of a good thing for so-much-sought-after a cavalier as he; so he left her. Again he was offered his choice between the "nut-kernel" which he had despised and a "bon-bon," and this time he chose the "nut-kernel." He liked her much better; she was a lively, round, little thing, and spoke with a mixture of Norland and Bergen accent. He soon learned that her father was a native of Bergen, but was now a clergyman in the Norland district. She was staying here in town with her sister, and very often went to balls; for they had so many relations--her voice rose and fell in true Norland fashion; but unfortunately she would soon have to be going home again; they were nervous about her up there in the north; nor did the old parents like to be left alone. Of course Kallem did the polite and pretended to be highly amused; they became such good friends that-- She told him with a great flow of words how she had come to town so as to help her sister to get settled; her sister was not at all practical, which she was; she could do nothing but play the piano, that sister of hers; she had been accustomed to it since her childhood, and had studied two years in Berlin. Then Kallem became all

attention, and it turned out that her sister was the partner he had danced with first and had thought so tiresome; his landlady, Fru Ragni Kule! The "nut-kernel," it must be observed, was not her real sister; they were children of different marriages. And the "nut-kernel" was not the eldest, as he had imagined; on the contrary, her sister was nearly nineteen, and she was a little more than seventeen.

Immediately he went and danced with Fru Kule, and remarked with much surprise that she was his landlady. Was she aware of that? Was that why she had chosen him to dance with before? She felt as if she were taken in the act of committing a crime, but could think of no excuse to make. "But why did you not tell me who you were?" continued he, insisting.

She felt still more overwhelmed by this fresh sin of having kept silence, and could not possibly get out a word. Then he said, rather rudely and impatiently:

"Perhaps you have some difficulty in speaking?"

She turned very pale; there was something unspeakably unhappy in her startled look. His rudeness was the natural consequence of his contempt for anyone who could lower themselves by such a marriage as hers was. But his sympathy was so thoroughly aroused by her pallor and helplessness that he hastened to say: "To be sure, I know that you possess the gift of a language which is easier for you than for most people--" and so he talked on in an easy, natural way about her music, made her sit down, told her that he had heard her play, and that Rendalen was such a competent judge; he turned the conversation upon all the world-renowned artists he had ever heard, and succeeded in making her join in; of course she had heard so many of them. By degrees she gained so much confidence that she even ventured to ask after Rendalen; she had not seen him at all since he had moved. He was all right, and then he described all Rendalen's peculiarities till she was obliged to laugh. She did not look "stupid" when she laughed, far from it. For a moment, too, there was a gleam in the eyes as of "many rays."

"Why did Rendalen move?" asked she, and there was something of the singing Norland accent in her voice too, but less that in her sister's. It was rather a weak voice, but at the same time so very sweet. He answered her with a question. But no, she knew nothing; and then she looked full at him; those were eyes! "Was it about the room?"

"About the room?" repeated he.

"Yes, I mean when he heard that my aunt wanted to live here--my husband's aunt," she added, correcting herself, and suddenly she became shy again.

"Had they given him notice to leave?"

"No, certainly not."

"Then he could not possibly be offended."

She quite agreed to that too. But Rendalen had never even been to say good-by. She never quite got rid of her shyness; it suited her though, as sometimes a veil can suit a face.

"Did you see much of his mother?"

"Yes," said she, and smiled.

"Why do you smile?"

"Well, perhaps it is hardly right of me, but she was so like a man." She was ashamed after she had said this, and would gladly have taken back her words; she had only meant that she was such a clever woman. But Kallem began joking her about it; she was forced to laugh again, and, as before said it was sweet to see and hear her laugh. "You see you can talk!" She glanced up at him; was he making fun of her? Suddenly he remembered that Rendalen had told her she ought to wear her hair off her forehead, and it was off this evening! Oh-ho!

She was really very pretty! To think of his not having found it out at once! And to think that others had not seen it and spoken about it. It was true that her face was

undeveloped and child-like, and the slender figure rather too thin. Her forehead was lovely; the eyebrows were delicately arched, but they were fair and not strongly marked. There was a difficulty in getting a look at the eyes; but now he knew that they were so confiding in all their gray-blue shyness, and they spoke volumes. Cheeks, chin, and mouth were soft and undecided; the latter always slightly open; it was short, too, which made it so "sweet." The nose was nothing much, but it was slightly crooked. Her hair was not very thick, but it had a pretty reddish shade in it. But her complexion! It was so dazzingly white one could not take one's eyes from it once one had found it out; but the thing was, one did not notice it unless the colour of the dress helped one or the light was dim; she wore no ornaments, not even a bracelet. The wrists were such as would belong to long, narrow hands, which he would have liked to see. "So you love music more than anything else?"

"Yes," answered she, "it is all that I can do." She looked down. He wondered what there was he might question her on that would not make her feel ashamed. But he had better have a care--there he sat falling in love as fast as he could. Unfortunately he was obliged to leave her to go and dance with, and talk to, others. As soon as he left her it was as though he would never find her again; she seemed to become invisible. He came back to her as soon as he could for propriety's sake. She evidently did not object; she was a little more confiding, even looked at him once or twice and smiled right up into his eyes. Fancy that! It was more than Rendalen could have aspired to. His falling in love began through her being so shy, and increased as she became more confiding. He asked if he might be allowed to see the ladies home. Surely he had a better right to it than anyone else as she was his landlady. She accepted his offer at once; she never hesitated. It was true, she said, that her nephew, the young man who had first offered Kallem the choice between a "nut-kernel" and a "dog-rose" was going with them too, but that they could both come.

"Yes, of course we can!" said he gaily, thinking secretly that the nephew should take charge of the "nut-kernel."

It was a thick, dark evening, the snow falling slightly. The star-like snow-flakes floated slowly and singly down as though each one had its own place and was bent on a special errand; not a breath of wind came to disturb them. Both ladies were well wrapped up and had Laplander shoes on. The music and dancing were still in full swing when they met, and there was much merry laughter among all the young people on the stairs and in the corridors; outside was the noise of bells from the sledges come to fetch the guests. The "nephew," being the host of the evening, could not leave so early; but he found someone to take his place; this other young man gave his arm to his lady, and they set off down hill at a run; but when Kallem would have done the same his young landlady was frightened and clung to him, as she was forced along running, and begged and implored him not to do it. It was just as though she did not see properly. He stopped and asked if that were the case. No; but she was so terribly afraid of falling.

"You seem to be nervous and timid altogether."

"Yes, I know I am," said she, truthfully. She was sweet enough, but in reality a bit of a prude. Then they walked on for a while in silence; they could see nothing of the other two. Bah! thought he, there is no use being offended, I suppose she can't help it. "It is not one o'clock yet," said he.

"No, but the youngest child is not very well; the servant is sitting up with her, but she has to get up early to-morrow morning." The North-country sing-song in her voice seemed to carry him far away out to sea.

"I miss the open sea so much now in the winter," said he; "here everything is ice-bound. I suppose it is always so in the West."

She told him that when she was at Berlin, and particularly after she had been playing, she could almost hear the sea at times. "But is it not a delightful thing that the sea always freshens one up when one is near it, and makes one melancholy when one thinks of it?" Just then something came driving past them at great speed; they

had to get out of the way and she pulled him with her to the extreme edge of the road, as three sledges, one after the other, dashed past them at a terrific rate.

They continued their walk, listening to the sleigh bells as they died away in the distance; again there was that complete silence necessary to attract attention to the falling snow-flakes.

"One ought really never to talk whilst snow is falling," said she.

Then the other two waited for them and the conversation was kept up for a time by the "nut-kernel" and the two gentlemen, till they came to a hill which the first couple took at full speed. By and by they saw them again through the veil of snow, but could hear nothing of them. But as the street became more inhabited, and the traffic greater, the couples kept closer together, and there was an end to all that had been amusing in their walk.

After that evening his impression of her seemed like a part of nature's scenery; she was blended with the starry snow-flakes; never had he met or seen anything so white and so pure. All that she had said about the sea and the falling snow was full of musical imagination; at last her whole person was enveloped in a sort of dim haze. As each of these pearls of first impressions rose up from the depths of his soul, his every sense seemed to be enamoured. He seemed to feel her presence in all the rooms; he started every time a door was opened; and if there came a soft footstep along the passage he thought it was hers; he felt it through his whole being. He was really rather afraid of meeting her again, in case the picture should lose its charm. And that was exactly what happened. Five or six days after, as he was coming out of the university, he met her with her sister and two little children; the street was crowded, so he neither saw nor recognized them till they were quite close. He bowed; the "nut-kernel" smiled and returned his bow, but her sister blushed very red and forgot to bow: at that moment she looked anything but clever. He stopped to thank them for the pleasant evening they had spent together, and began talking to the

one sister; the other bent down to the children--two sweet little girls, dressed out like dolls, one about three, the other four years old. He invited them into a confectioner's for refreshments; the offer was accepted after a good deal of hesitation; but the married sister never raised her eyes, and he could hardly induce her to sit down. Out of pure shyness and uneasiness she worried the children so that they became impatient. He offered them cakes and wine; but she could not make up her mind what she would have, and at last allowed her sister to choose. Her face was framed in by a bonnet with silk flaps; the forehead quite disappeared, and her face became round and insignificant; her figure was concealed by clothes which were all much too large for her (he heard later that they had belonged to her late sister). It was only when he began to notice the children--he had a wonderful gift that way, for he was fond of children--that they really made friends again; it happened down on the floor, too, because the youngest child had made a terrible mess of itself with a cake full of whipped cream, which the mother had most injudiciously chosen for it. There they were now, both drying the child with their pocket-handkerchiefs, and the mother thanking him over and over again, with a guilty feeling that it had been her fault. The child, who so blissfully had made itself in such a mess, asked for more cake of the same kind and would not be content with any other; and Kallem (though he knew it was not good for the child to have so much) readily agreed to it; but he took the child on his lap, asked for a napkin, and watched carefully over it until the last bite had disappeared. She stood by humbly taking a lesson. Then the child asked for another cake, to which Kallem also agreed. Then the eldest of the two, who had patiently been watching her sister eat her cakes, now ventured to ask for one; so he took her up on his other knee and fed them both. Everybody enjoyed themselves thoroughly while this important business was going on; even Fru Kule joined in the laugh. And as before said, when she laughed she was very "sweet." The three grown-up ones drank each another glass of wine, and as they walked home Kallem carried the youngest child in his arms. He became fast friends with the little thing;

her stepmother was more courageous after she had had her wine, and said: "Is she not a dear wee thing, my little Juanita?" She stretched her hand up to the child, who took it in her thick little glove, and kept tight hold of it as they walked along.

He carried the little one up-stairs, and was careful to show her where his room was, and invited them both to come and pay him a visit the next day, which was Sunday. Directly after his dinner he went out and bought some oranges, apples, figs, and other dried fruits, so as to have something for them when they came.

"Is she not a dear wee thing, my little Juanita?" This sentence, with a little of her north-country sing-song in it, he set to music and went about humming it every time he thought of her. Her voice, her eyes looking up at the child, and her hand stretched out to it, were all part of the melody! "Is she not a dear wee thing, my little Juanita?" became the refrain of his life; he taught it to Rendalen, too; they greeted each other with it when they met at the gymnasium in the evenings. But Edward Kallem kept to himself the notion he had that she had been so shy because she had met him again--perhaps because it was broad daylight. He mentioned, too, that she looked so funny in the clothes that were so much too large for her; they seemed to have been made for a young, growing girl; but he never said a word about how uneasy she had grown when he looked at her in the confectioner's shop.

The children often came to see him; he gave them oranges and candied fruit, and walked on his hands and jumped over the chairs, and they were all tremendously happy. But the servant spoilt everything; he could distinctly read the following in her smile: "You are a rogue! You are doing all this for their mother's sake."

He was coward enough to tell her that the children were not to come to him for a while. It cut him to the heart as he sat there the following evening and heard how the eldest one opened the door to the passage to run in to him, but was caught and carried back crying. He rang for the servant and told her to give the children the remains of what he had bought for them. She took the things from him but said: "Is

it not too much?" and looked at him with a cunning smile; he could have beaten her. But then he thought to himself, "If she suspects me no matter what I do, then the children may just as well come!" And the next evening he fetched them in himself from the kitchen.

One day he met her sister, who was going out. She nodded brightly to him and said: "Thanks for our last treat! Fancy," she added, "in a few days I am going away."

Then he suggested that it would be quite the correct thing for them to go and have a little farewell feast at the confectioner's. She agreed with him, and they settled that they would all meet the next day, the children too, and have it all over again just like the last time. And so they did. Fru Kule was not quite so shy as the other day, Kallem himself was in the best of spirits, and the children were uproarious. He was full of the wildest, maddest love fancies as they went merrily home he dancing along with Juanita on his head, and teaching the sisters to sing, "Is she not a dear wee thing, my little Juanita?"

He was at the railway station the day the sister was to leave. Several of their relations and friends were there to say good-bye. Both the sisters were very unhappy; the one to be left behind perhaps the most so; she wept unceasingly, even after the train had gone. For a moment he thought of going away and leaving the relations alone together, but she said: "Oh, no, don't go!" And yet there was no reason for her wishing him to stay; she walked home beside him and the others, crying all the way; and when the others left them and went their own way, and he and she stood before their door, she could find nothing to say, but just went on up-stairs. On the stairs he asked her if she and the children would like to go for a drive; it might cheer her up a little. She only shook her head. "Tomorrow perhaps?" asked he, respectfully, as he opened the door for her. She went in, but came back to say, "Thank you, to-morrow!" gave him her hand and a look from her dear eyes full of tears.

He fancied he could tell from her deep distress that she must feel lonely. Not perhaps in everyday life, because her imagination kept her time occupied; but when anything out of the common happened, rousing her and awakening her from her dreams, then she would look around and see that she was forsaken.

The next day he took her and the children out in a sledge and drove them himself. After the drive he went in to see Kule, who thanked him in his heavy sort of way for being so kind to the children. They showed Kallem all their toys, and Kule asked his wife to play a piece when the children were sent away; he sat himself, smoking a long pipe, which his wife usually had to fill for him; Kallem had done it now in her stead. Kallem saw then, for the first time, a stout kitchen-maid, an elderly, masculine-looking woman, who sang in a northern dialect, like birds shrieking over the sea. She was both cook and Kule's attendant. Apparently the wife was allowed entire liberty in whatever concerned herself, that is to say, the children and her music. At this moment she was playing that same piece by the Russian composer which he had heard from his own room, and perhaps better. Not because he was particularly attentive; he was looking at her. The upper part of the face now flashing down over the keys and music was very different to how he knew it; probably it was like this Rendalen had seen her. How much she would have to go through before the lower part of the face was equally developed? A few days ago he had had a letter from a cousin who lived at Madison, in Wisconsin; he had been made professor at the university there, and his wife, a Norwegian lady, studied under him. Something of the kind would be necessary to bring life and shape into these dull cheeks and weak chin, that vacillating mouth with the cracked lips. But how touching it was to see all this child-like dependence. Close by he saw the husband's huge hands resting on the arm of his chair--he lay back in the chair like a dead river-god in breeches. Whilst she was playing, the door to the right was opened, and in came the third supernatural, north-country being, an old lady with white hair, a large round face, and horn spectacles; this was the aunt, she was taller than Kallem, and stout in

proportion to her height. The young wife moved about amongst them like a pleasure-yacht among Atlantic steamers laden to sinking-point. She looked upon Kallem now as an intimate friend, although she had probably not confided in him at all; but their mutual youth sought to conspire against all that was a hindrance and hard to bear. In his love for her he grew impatient, longing to set her free; the thought that he could not do it made the air of the room seem quite oppressive. It distressed him greatly, this incomprehensible connection.

The impressions he received from this visit disturbed him in his studies for his examination, which, until that day, had been very regular.

He formed the wildest of plans, even wrote over to his cousins in America, and asked if they could receive a young lady to live with them. He confided in Rendalen, who at first protested angrily; but at last Kallem convinced him. Her feeling of individual responsibility ought to be aroused, she ought to be shown the dangers of continuing her present life; above all, she ought to be sent away, far away, where she would have freedom of thought and liberty to develop.... Kallem gained more and more assurance, and his love grew stronger from all this self-imposed solicitude. Each time he met her, however short were the meetings, even though he only bowed to her on the street or in the corridor, strengthened him in the conviction that she was his, and his only, and must be set free!

This was before he had said a word to her about it.

Often before had he been in love, and often had pretended without its being the real thing; but now he had a longing to save, and then re-form, all that was so pure yet so undeveloped, so talented and yet so forlorn, it lay in his disposition, this desire, and he gave himself up to it with all his soul. She, for her part, lost somewhat of her shyness each time they met; it seemed as though he really were a comfort to her after her sister left; indeed, unless he were much mistaken, he was even more than that. At all events, there was one unmistakable sign; he had told her that he stayed at

home in the evenings on purpose to hear her play, and that he left his door ajar the better to hear; now she played every evening and often for a long time.

When he met her out with the children, and took them to the confectioner's, he had the greatest desire to speak out; but her manner prevented it. It was her trustful innocence that was the principal hindrance, and he dared not startle her. All the energy in him drove him to action; but his love for her lent itself to her wish for a poetical pastime where love might not be mentioned, although everything was symbolical of it. There was a charm about their intercourse the like of which he had never experienced.

On a certain evening, once every week, she took part in a private concert, or something of the kind, at the house of some of her husband's relations, the same house, in fact, where she had gone to that dance. Kallem made his way in to these evenings, through his fellow-student, her nephew. Of course he went there solely and entirely so as to be able to walk home with her at night. At this time the snow was gone and the streets were full of ice. When he told her that he was going to be there, too, and would be allowed to see her home (at which she was very pleased), it was an understood thing that he always had either a sledge or carriage for her.

They were about to start for home after a long evening when there had been a great deal too much music for those small rooms; she hastened to get on her wraps and get away. Here he took her arm. "It is fortunate," said he, "that the moon is just up." She thought they would have got into one of the sledges that stood waiting there, or into a carriage that just then drove up; she gave a little scream, as it was quite smooth ice just by the door, yet she went on bravely. Meanwhile they passed by one sledge after the other, and the carriage, too. None seemed to be theirs. "Are we not going to drive?" asked she. The rogue laughed; it was he who had planned this walk. She tried to hide her disappointment; but, after a few vain efforts, begged to be allowed to drive. Then he recollected how frightened she had been that first time; his

conscience pricked him, and he declared they would go to the very first stand, which was not far off. The road was not so very slippery, but it was steep; she clung to his arm, staring nervously before her, with an occasional little scream. Matters did not mend as they advanced, for at times the whole road was covered with ice, though there were always one or two safe spots. He rather lost courage; especially as he no longer heard her little screams. He had never seen anyone so frightened before. As a matter of course, they made their way slowly, step by step, with many and long pauses.

Some of the gardens and fields round about them were bare, and some were covered with snow and ice; it was to these she tried to make her way; but he showed her that the way was stopped either by a house or a garden; it was not like in the country. The fields looked broken up, the sky, too, for long, narrow, cloudlets were floating through the dark-blue atmosphere above, exactly like ice down below here with gaps between. The moon seemed to be racing after the cloudlets at full speed, trying to overtake them, pass through and hurry still farther on; there must be a perfect hurricane up above; down below all was quiet. Kallem's mistake made him feel both uneasy and unhappy. The unsteady light there was over the whole of nature, with its scattered colouring only increased this feeling; surely something would go wrong. And never did that feeling come over him without its bringing back to his remembrance that night of terror from his childhood, with all its consequences. Was this to follow him all through life, this terrifying forewarning of his own wrong-doings? He was greatly excited; for she must not be allowed to fall. If it had not been for her timidity he would have gone down the hills in a merry, sliding dance; now her being frightened made him frightened too. Each slippery place became a real danger, from which he was only saved by passing on to a fresh one; they neither looked at each other nor did they utter a word, they were impatient and afraid. They were several minutes in doing what otherwise would have taken a few seconds; the one secretly blamed the other, struggling on as though for dear life.

There was just an occasional gasping, "Good heavens!" or "Take care here!" or a despairing "No, no, it's no use!" and then a "Try again! Come along!"--at last not even that. She might groan and lament, almost cry, he no longer answered her. She was so taken up by her own fright that she never noticed the change.

But at last they saw salvation in front of them, namely, high houses on each side which had kept off the sun and prevented the snow melting. The question was now to get thus far; the stand was close by. At last they succeeded. She stopped and drew breath and tried to laugh, but without success. "Let us wait a little," she said, and drew a long breath again. They turned and looked on either side; farther away they heard sleigh bells and listened. "I hope the last horse has not left the stand," said she; "it is late." She took his arm and they walked on. The road was not quite all; right here either; the snow was trodden down hard, but there had been sand strewn on the pavement; they walked quicker, and by degrees with greater assurance. "Thank God!" said she, as much relieved as though she had come out of a sea of ice. Hardly had she said the words before down she fell. They had come to a deceptive place where there had been water, which was now frozen and covered with hoar frost. She slipped, and up against one of his feet, so that he too slipped and fell--the one on top of the other. He swore a tremendous oath in the fulness of his heart, and sprang to his feet again in order to help her; but she lay there immovable with closed eyes.

He turned like ice. Was it concussion of the brain? He laid her on his knee, pulled off his right-hand glove with his teeth, and then untied the strings under' her chin. Her arms hung loosely down, her face was pale as death, he opened her cloak, he wanted to give her air. Then she moved. "Ragni!" whispered he; "Ragni!" and bent down still nearer to her. "Dear, darling Ragni! Forgive me!" She opened her eyes. "Do you hear? Can you forgive me?" The colour came back to her cheeks, her hand went up to her cloak, which was unfastened; then she must have felt it, she had only been dazed with fright. He could no longer control his joy, he pressed her head to him and kissed her one, two, three times. "Oh, how I love you!" whispered he, and

kissed her again. He felt she wanted to move, so he got up at once and helped her up as well. But she was not able to stand alone, and nearly fell, so he supported her to the garden railing just in front of the house; she caught hold of it and leaned against it as if she could not bear her own weight. He let go his hold of her to see if she could stand without help, which she was able to do. "I'll run for a sledge," said he, and away he went. As he ran along he bethought himself that he might have done that at once and all would have been avoided. But would he be able to get a sledge? If not there, he would run on farther. If only she could stand and nobody go by.... He ran and he flew, and when he saw a horse and sledge standing there, he jumped in, and would have had the coachman drive off at the top of his speed without knowing where he was to go to. When that was rectified and the sledge had started, he realized what he had said and done as he held her in his arms! He had felt it all along, though it had only been as it were in soft and gentle tones, now it burst out into full, rich melody.

"Drive on, faster! She is standing over there to the right. We fell down, and she hurt herself. There she is!" He jumped out and hurried up to her, while the coachman turned and drove the sledge close up to them. She was still leaning against the railing, half sideways; she had fastened her cloak again and drawn down her veil. She gave him her hand when he came, that she might have support; he took it, put his other hand on her waist so as to guide her in front of him; he did not wish to risk being upset again. There was no further accident, he put her in the sledge, wrapped her up carefully, paid the coachman and told him where to go. She begged him not to drive with her; she never said good-bye; never looked up. They drove off.

At once he felt--now she was leaving him. Nothing annoys a sensible man more than his own stupidity and want of control. He wandered about the streets that night by the hour, and sneaked home like a beaten hound. He dared not inquire of the servant next morning, but in the evening she told him, unasked, that her mistress had not been well; she had been sick and was still in bed, but was rather better. Marie's

conscious smile put him into a towering passion. And she had the impudence, too, to examine his face closely. All the same, he was obliged to go and inquire the next day; her mistress was up and quite well again. But neither that day nor the next did he get a glimpse of her, or hear a sound from any of the children. Neither did she play in the evening, he made an excuse to stay at home and listen. Neither she nor the children passed that way when they were going out; they went down the back-stairs. He never met her. She chose new ways and roads.

Until then his love had been a secret happiness full of many plans. But now he had used violence and broken into the sanctuary, and his bright days and healthy nights gave way to ceaseless dreaming and useless ponderings. He went through all that happened, and each time with self-torturing pangs. He despised himself, allowed himself to be led into all sorts of dissipation and then despised himself all the more. From the moment he had touched her lips and had offended her ears there was, as it were, a veil drawn across her image; he no longer saw the pure, dove-like whiteness, borne in all its charms and helplessness by music; he only saw one he longed for. But his was a healthy nature and he had a strong sense of the comic side of things; he would not let himself be eaten up by this self-torture and stupid longing; he would move away immediately and would do it under pretence that he was going to travel. In that way he thought to overcome all difficulties as he would leap over a fence of split sticks. He could not bear her having closed her door to him; he could not even bear the servant's impertinent smile.

He was struck now by so much in this moving of his which was like the time when Rendalen had moved. He had not borne it one single day, either! Surely it could never have been for the same reason? He laughed aloud; of course it must be exactly the same thing that had happened to him!

Rendalen's mother had been in town and had lived there; at that time Ragni had been with them a great deal; Rendalen and she had played duets together. They kept this

up after his mother had left, and it was always on his piano; he knew that for certain.... This seemed to him a most humiliating coincidence.

Kallem knew no higher or nobler nature than Rendalen's; he would never have allowed himself any liberties. But that she could succeed in so completely disturbing his peace of mind that he had been obliged to move? There must be something strange in her thus to unsettle them. He excused himself in this way, but what was worse was that he felt an ever-increasing temptation. The same evening he said to Marie that he was going to leave either the next day or the day after, he was not sure which it would be; but she was to ask for his bill--as a matter of course, he would pay for the whole quarter. The girl looked at him, she guessed the hidden meaning at once; did she enjoy it or had she something to tell? In her usual modest way, she asked if he wanted his bill at once? No, he did not.

He did not leave the day following, but put it off till the next day. He meant to go away for a few days, but would first take lodgings somewhere and move all his possessions. He went out in the afternoon and found rooms, but quite in another part of the town. Then he speculated a little as to what reasons he should give for his moving--particularly to Rendalen; he came to the conclusion that he would tell him the whole truth; to others he would merely say that he had been disturbed in various ways at his old lodgings, which was the truth. He went home again about five o'clock, and in through the bedroom door, put on his dressing-gown and slippers, went into the next room and lay down on the sofa, where he fell fast asleep--he needed the rest. At seven o'clock the servant came in and lit the stove without his noticing it. He woke up a little later and heard the fire crackling and saw the light; he understood from that, that it must be past seven o'clock. His thoughts flew at once to her who was so near in those other rooms. He had a secret hope that, when she knew he was going away, he would be allowed to hear her play once more. So far he had been disappointed in this; but he could not give up his belief that his departure would trouble her. He lay on the sofa listening. Could he go and say good-bye to her

just as if nothing had happened? Should he light his lamp? Should he go out again? He raised himself up and stared at the fire in the stove. Then he heard a door in the passage open, and voices--a couple of women's voices, with a strong north-country accent; from that he concluded that some newly arrived relations had been calling and were being escorted to the door; he heard the aunt's slow, drawling voice; he heard, too, a man's voice--was it Ole Tuft? But he could not hear her voice, the voice he was listening for. There were good-byes all round and the door was shut; then came the aunt's voice again, then Ole Tuft's, it really was his voice--he had evidently arrived just as the others were leaving; they went into the aunt's room and shut the door after them, at the same time a door was shut a little further away. Again there was a ring; again a door opened and out came--both the children, shouting with joy; they had seized the occasion to try and run into Kallem, but they were not allowed, so there was a chase after them down the corridor amid much laughter; they were captured and a door shut upon them; at the same moment, the entrance door was opened; one of those north-country ladies had forgotten her galoshes, and now he could hear Ragni's voice offering to fetch a light, as it was quite dark; but the offer was refused in the usual singsong style. Her galoshes were close by the door; but she could not get them on easily, they were so new! At last! Now they were on! Again was heard "Good-bye, good-bye!" and then the answer, "Very welcome on Friday?" This last was Ragni's voice. Did he deceive himself--or was it not just like the voice of one who feels danger is near? It did not sound like her voice. Did she speak of him perhaps against her will? Up he jumped, and was at the door before she had shut the outer one. Should he? He listened for some sign. He did not hear her go; perhaps she was still standing outside. His heart beat fast and loud, but his hand felt softly for the door-handle--he opened it noiselessly. To him who had been staring at the fire in his stove, the passage seemed pitch-dark. He put out his hands to feel for the door and got hold of the latch; he groped his way still further, but no one was there. Could she have gone out with the last visitor? But no, he heard her say good-bye and

remind the others about Friday. How was it he had not heard her go? He never heard the inner door open again. She must be in the passage.

His heart beat so that he could almost hear it; but he was impelled onward. Then his hand touched some clothes; he turned to ice! but he came to his senses directly, for the garments were cold and empty. Some one was heard coughing and spitting in one of the rooms, it was Kate; then the children were heard talking in the kitchen or dining-room. He stood still, like any criminal, when he heard these accustomed every-day sounds. He ought never to have embarked on this proceeding. He heard the aunt's droning questions and Ole's clear answers; that is to say, he heard their voices, but not what they said. Was Ragni in the passage? She might have been looking for something and have stopped in her fright at seeing him. If he went on, he might startle her so that she might rush up to any door and open it. There he would be then visible to all!

Still, she was too timid for that. He advanced a few steps. He was in slippers, so his steps were hardly audible; but he hoped that she was not there. The children were talking in the room at the end of the passage; he could hear them so distinctly now the nearer he came; he seemed to see them kneeling each on her chair and building houses at the table. He was ashamed of himself; what business had he there? But though he asked himself that question, he went on all the same; he went from one side to the other, touching first a cloak, then a shawl, then the panel of a door, then one of the coloured passage windows, which he could just distinguish. A carriage rattled past; soon after there came a sound of sleigh-bells dying away in the distance; in this kind of half-thaw both carriages and sledges were used. Something fell down in the kitchen; Kate began to cough again; how long time must seem to him! probably he never used lights? Surely the door between the children's room and the kitchen was open, for they ran in there to find out what had fallen down; he heard the north-country servant answer with lazy good-nature; it was a wooden dish that fell, it tumbled out of the rack. Still he went on. If Ragni were there she must be in

the extreme corner. How frightened she must be by this time! What must she think of him? Were he to turn back now, he would look like an unsuccessful thief. It was a little lighter by the window, but no further; no light came either from under or over the doors, not even through the keyholes, or from the children's room. Could she be standing there? He fancied he must see her were she there.

Perhaps she had gone from the passage in to see her aunt? Close by his own door? Or she might have left the door of Kate's or the children's room open when she went out, and have shut it again just as he opened his. Could she be sitting there dreaming? He felt sure of it; but that was because he wished it to be so. But still he went forward. At last close up to the door he could hear the children in their room and the servant bustling about in the kitchen to the left. He turned round and felt much relieved. He walked back much faster, keeping his hands in front of him; suddenly he took hold of a warm, firm arm. He shivered and trembled, sparks seemed to flash from his eyes; he stopped abruptly. But the arm scarcely moved, so he regained courage. He let his arm glide slowly down from the arm and round the waist, which he cautiously encircled. It felt soft and pliable; she stood quite still but trembled a little. He gave a faint pressure. With his other hand he took hold of her hand and gently pressed it; it trembled too. He pressed it again--and step by step they moved slowly forward--without resistance, but still not quite willingly. He could just hear his own footsteps, but hers not at all; the children were talking quietly now. There was not a sound to be heard either in Kule's, or in the aunt's room; but in front of them was an open chink at his door. They arrived there; he pushed it open gently and would have led her in; but here she stopped and tried to draw away her hand. He heard her breathing and felt her breath, could just make out the pale face as he gently pushed her to the threshold, then over it, and closed the door behind them. Here he let go his hold of her so as to shut the door as quietly as possible. She stood with her back to him just as he left her; but with her face buried in her hands; when he came up to her she began to cry. He put his arm round her to

draw her closer to him; and her crying turned to sobbing. She sobbed so bitterly and grievously that his blood was sobered and a fresh train of thought set in. Unresistingly she let him lead her to the sofa; she sobbed so despairingly that he felt he must have a light, as one would if anyone were taken ill. So he made haste to trim the lamp, remembered though that the blinds must first be pulled down, so he did that and then lit the lamp.

No one could weep like that who had not been for days and nights shut in with their grief. The very table she leaned on shook with her sobs.

Hundreds of times he had made fun of those lovers who in novels and plays go down upon their knees; but now he pushed the end of the table a little to one side and let himself sink on his knees before her like the humblest sinner. He was trying to see her face, but with both hands she held her handkerchief up before it. Her head, shoulders, and bosom heaved with her violent weeping, he felt each movement, and begged and implored her to forgive him! He had not been master of himself when he spoke those words to her that night on the ice. He loved her, they belonged to each other. "Oh, do not weep so!" he entreated, "I cannot bear it!" He took her hands in his and sat down on the sofa beside her, he laid her head on his shoulder and put his arms round her; he kissed her hair, he pressed her tear-stained cheek against his own; but she cried just as much in this position as in the former one. He wanted to give her some wine. No, ho no!--but it was really terrible this crying. Could it be because he had brought her in to his room? He had been longing so to see her that he could not resist it when he heard her in the passage. Surely she would not have him leave without saying good-by? Was he never to see her again? She shook her head, and disengaging herself from his grasp, laid her head down on the table and sobbed into her handkerchief, more piteously than ever. "Do you wish me to leave?" he asked; but she did not hear him. He allowed her to cry on; after some little time he bent down to her and said: "I will do all you wish me to do." Then she raised herself in all her tears from the table and threw herself in his arms. He folded both arms

round her, and felt, as he held her in that close embrace, that she took it in a higher and nobler way than he did.

But someone was at the door and it was opened; it was the servant with his supper. In a great fright he took away his arms and stood up; but Ragni merely laid herself down on the table again and sobbed. Carefully the servant put down the tray on the vacant edge of the table, with equal care she moved the lamp a little and pushed the tray further in. She was red in the face and did not look at either of them; but she had the usual smile which seemed to say: I have been expecting this for long! And now Kallem fancied there was a quiet roguish delight in that smile, so very differently can one look at one and the same thing. She came in very quietly and went out equally so, and shut the door as gently as though he himself had done it.

"Good God! Ragni!" he exclaimed. She answered not a word, it seemed to her a trifling matter, engrossed as she was in her own grief. Again he took her and drew her close to him, then she said: "Oh, how unhappy I am!"--and that was really the only thing she said all the time she sat there. He could answer nothing but what would have sounded very stupid. He tried to say something and took refuge in caresses; but she got up and drew herself away--she wished to leave him. He felt he was not able to keep her any longer, but took her to the door. Before she opened it, she turned to him with a look of sorrowing devotion, like one in death-agony. He put out the lamp and she slipped out.

But just as she shut the door behind her, a faint ray of light fell on her, it came from the little recess that led into the aunt's room; at that very moment the door opened and her aunt stood before her--looking to Ragni's fevered imagination like a huge whale on two legs. Of course, the aunt had heard Ragni crying in her lodger's room, and had seen at a glance how to account for Ragni's strange manner the last few days. So she had kept guard outside her own door, and just as Ragni was leaving Kallem's room, she gave a push to her door, thereby causing the light to fall full on

her. Her aunt put out her hand; that was as much as to say: "This way, my lady!" And Ragni obeyed, and her aunt let her pass in before her. She was not alone. There stood a sofa against the wall nearest to the room she had just quitted; a tall, fair man with a mild and gentle face rose up from the sofa-corner; it was Ole Tuft. It was he who had first heard her cry and had been outside their door. Ragni sank down onto a chair between the sofa and the door.

The next day she was in bed. But before Kallem went out he got a note from her in which she told him that her aunt had heard her crying in his room, and so had Tuft; he had also been at their door. There was nothing more in the note; but low down at the bottom of the page the almost illegible words: "Never more."

In the midst of all the fright which now came over him, too, Kallem thought those poor little words "never more" so eloquent, that they caused his eyes to fill with tears, but his heart to take fresh courage. Something must be done now! Her aunt and Ole Tuft had evidently been cross-questioning her. He had heard nothing of it, so it must either have been done very quietly or else not in that room at all. Poor, poor Ragni!

He was full of the greatest compassion, of furious indignation, of fear, revenge, boundless love, disappointment, rage!

He dressed himself and hurried out into the street. Where to? He would go to Ole Tuft; the confounded croaker meddling in his affairs! He was both spy and detective! What the devil did he want? What was his object? Was that walking in "the ways of God," that too? Peeping through key-holes and listening at doors? It was all in "the ways of God" that this fellow had stolen his handsome sister from him; was he now to rob him of his love? Why had he not gone direct to him? Why first tell the aunt?

He felt the greatest desire to go and maltreat him, to nearly half kill him. By heavens, he deserved it! He turned round really intending to go there; but then he

seemed to see his sister's great eyes gazing steadfastly at him. It was no fancy; turn about as he would, on every side he was met by those clear eyes. He seemed even to feel her cheek resting against his like that last evening they were together. The end of it was that he walked past. But that brought him in the neighbourhood of his old lodgings, and he thought of Rendalen. He would go to him! He would not keep one item of the truth from him; it would be such happiness to unburden one's self. At a little distance from the door he saw someone coming out. Was it----? Ole Tuft! The scoundrel himself! ... Kallem's blood boiled; but Tuft went the other way and never saw his brother-in-law.

Kallem did not know Tuft at all as he was now. Had he done so, he would have understood that for him it was a question of saving two souls from perdition. He lived in a state of feverish sleeplessness for the sake of these two precious souls, and sought help; and allowed himself no peace or rest till he had accomplished his aim. He might have gone himself to Kallem, but it might have been dangerous, and certainly was useless. Other steps must be taken in this matter. If Kallem had had any inkling of this, instead of going to Rendalen, he would have followed Tuft home and have beaten him till he could not stand.

Fortunately, however, he suspected nothing and rang at Rendalen's door, full of all he was going to tell him. Rendalen opened the door himself at once; he was almost ready dressed to go out; he stood there with his hat on and his overcoat in his hand, well brushed and carefully got up. As soon as he saw Kallem, he lifted his head like a war-horse confronting the enemy. "You here?" he exclaimed. Kallem walked in quickly, highly astonished. Rendalen shut the door, locked it as well, and flung his hat and coat from him. "I was just getting ready to go to you!" he hissed out the words; he was quite pale through all his freckles, his thin lips tightly pressed together, his small gray eyes flashing. And now he clenched his broad, short hands, the hands of a giant, till they got quite white. His red hair stood on end and seemed to rival the eyes in flashing fire; the enormous bodily strength of the man made

Kallem uneasy and alarmed. "What the devil is the matter?" The other answered in the greatest rage, though subdued: "Tuft has been here and told me everything. Ah, I see you turn pale." He came still closer to him: "She was the most innocent creature on earth--you villain!" His voice trembled.

"Oh, come now!" said Kallem, but he turned cold as ice. But the other had no longer any control over himself and interrupted: "You think I know nothing about such things? Why, it is common to every single individual! And do you know why I moved away from there? Do you imagine that I have less power and influence over anyone than you? You damned, cowardly villain!" He poured forth these words like wild shrieks out of his troubled spirit, and yet he spoke more quietly than he had previously done. Anger and scorn in such a degree is always infectious.

"Oh, don't you be jealous, man!" shouted Kallem. If a bucket full of blood had been poured over Rendalen, he could not have turned redder, and as suddenly turned white again. In vain he strove to speak, but not being able, he went straight at Kallem, piercing him with his eyes, so that they almost burnt him. He just managed to say: "I have the--the--the greatest wish to fight you!"

"Come on!" said Kallem, and put himself into position. Hardly had he thus mockingly challenged him, before Rendalen's right hand swung round in the air. Kallem stooped down and then rose unhurt, but kept on provoking him. Rendalen rushed at him again. Kallem nimbly jumped on one side. "Are you out of your senses?" shouted he, loudly.

Rendalen stood there just as if someone had seized him from behind and were holding him, and by degrees he seemed to lose all power. He stared in front of him stiff and pale, until at last, summoning all his strength of will to his aid, he succeeded in turning away and walked slowly to the window, placed himself in front of it, and stared vacantly out in the air. His breathing was so rapid that Kallem thought he would have had a fit. Kallem himself stood quite motionless; he was too

angry to go near him. To him Rendalen was a mystery; a moment ago a prey to the most violent passion, and now half paralysed. Nothing was heard but the sound of his breathing; his face was unhappy--so utterly, miserably unhappy! What in the world was the meaning of it all? He looked at his companion, till all his old kindly feeling for him woke up again; and without further ado he went up to the window too and stood beside him. "You must not take it so much to heart," he said; "it is not so bad as you perhaps think." The other did not answer; perhaps he never heard it, he kept on looking out of the window as before. Or, perhaps he did not believe him, and thought he was scoffing. Then Kallem smiled, and his smile was unmistakable, it was good and genuine. Life and color seemed to come into Rendalen's face again; he turned his head. In joyful haste Kallem said: "Upon my soul, I have done her no harm, old fellow." Rendalen did not at once take in what he said; he could not turn it about in his mind so quickly; but when Kallem put his head closer to him and said: "Upon my honor I have not!" then Rendalen's heart rejoiced and he put his arms round him.

Overcome as they both were, there followed an exchange of confidences which was boundless. Rendalen heard how it had all come about, and how it was they came to love each other. It made a great impression on Rendalen, which he neither could nor would try to conceal. So Kallem asked him openly whether he too loved her? Again Rendalen turned pale and ill at ease, and Kallem felt unhappy at his own thoughtlessness; but it could not be rectified. The conversation came to a dead stop, and Rendalen's eyes avoided his. When, at last, he succeeded in shaping his answer, he said: "I am not at liberty to love anyone. That is why I moved."

Kallem felt this to the very marrow of his bones. Rendalen sat with his arms on the table, and a book in his hands which he kept turning over and looking at both outside and in. "There is madness in our family--widely spread. My father was mad. I--well, you know how ungovernable I am--I am on the borders of it. My father was exactly the same. So that when you said that there--about being out of my senses,

you hit the mark. The very words of my mother. I dare not give in. Not in love either. All the same I could not always resist. However, I have no wish to confess. Music helps me to forget; but here it betrayed me, and has done so before, too." He put the book from him, took another one, and laid it on the first one, spinning them round on the table. Then he heard Kallem say, half laughingly: "And so you chose me for your substitute?"

"What the deuce could I do? I thought you were an honorable man."

In the evening Kallem struggled to write a letter to the apothecary, he wanted him to help them. The more he wrote, the more impossible he found it to explain to the old bachelor and crusty naturalist, what love was, and in what sore distress was she for whom he now wrote to ask for help; he tore up his letter. Quickly he determined to try his father. The latter had done all he could to help Ole Tuft; perhaps he now would help someone else? His father was very peculiar, but he was a warm-hearted man and hated injustice. Edward Kallem had never heard of anything more unjust than Ragni's self-imposed lot; he was almost certain that his father would feel the same. So he told him about their love--quite without reserve; he promised that if his father would help her, this treaty should be like a consecration. He would apply himself more earnestly than ever to his studies; he would strive to obtain the highest of everything. And though it might be long before they could marry, both on account of his as well as her further education--he would wait for her as faithfully as she for him; that was his solemn promise. And he hoped his father had no reason to think he would break that promise; but rather take him at his word and help her.

He was not mistaken in this. Three days afterward he had an answer by telegram, that everything was arranged according to his wish; the necessary should be sent by the first post. With this victorious telegram in hand, he began to work his and Rendalen's mutual plan; to have her sent over to Kallem's cousin at Madison. He wrote to him at once and asked him to cable "yes" or "no."

He obtained a first meeting with her through the servant, who showed herself to be thoroughly faithful to Ragni; it was in a street outside the town and did not last long; the servant was with her. He told her at once what were his plans and how it could be arranged, and who was to have a hand in the matter. She was so frightened that he thought it would be impossible to proceed; on no consideration would she leave the children. He was in despair after this meeting, and went to Rendalen to complain. He at once suggested that the children could be sent to his mother; he would write to her about it. When Kallem, at their next "rendezvous," told her this, Ragni seemed to hesitate; she acknowledged humbly that she could never educate them so well herself. But what she partially agreed to the one day, she drew back from the next; every time she had been with the children it again all seemed so impossible to her. And as she each time worked herself up to such a pitch of excitement that all the passers-by stared at them, they could no longer keep their appointments in the street. There could be no question of their meeting anywhere but at his or Rendalen's rooms; but Ragni had again become so shy that he doubted whether she would consent. He prepared her for it by letters, and got Marie also to try and persuade her to it, and to accompany her. At last this succeeded too. After this they met a few times at his rooms, once too, at Rendalen's; but always there was the same undecided wavering and hesitation as to what she would do, and always there was great despair. She was afraid, too, of the actual journey; fancy going all the way to America, alone! And alone from New York to Madison; that was the worst of all! It was impossible, quite impossible! Marie would like to go with her; Kallem promised her a ticket; but on no account could they both forsake the children; no, it was most wrong even to think of such a thing. Then Marie would wait until the children were properly provided for.

If she really were to start, she would have to go on board without anyone knowing anything of it; therefore the necessary things for the voyage would have to be bought; but as a matter of course, all would have to be most carefully arranged. He

expected to meet with opposition in this; but she was still such a child, that before it was really settled about the voyage, he had persuaded her to buy all her travelling outfit; it amused her immensely. If only he could manage to have a good long talk with her, or see her every day just for a little--but she was cautious to an extreme. Then he wrote letters yards long; she dare not answer, she fancied she was watched by her aunt and the north-country kitchen-maid; but as the letters told her of all the strength of his love, and as they, with all the cunning of love, were written to charm her imagination, they effected a great deal more than the meetings had done. It was thanks to the cunning Marie that these letters reached their destination; she was too clever both for the aunt and for the north-country girl. As long as these arrangements were going on and keeping his strength up to the mark, Kallem lived for nothing else. Perseverance increases our courage; and when at last the cable came with "yes," he ventured to form a bold plan. It consisted in getting everything ready by the time the next big English steamer was to start, and not to say a word to her about it, but to make sure that she that day should have an excuse for going out early and remaining out a long time, and also arrange for Marie to be at liberty. He made an appointment for Ragni to meet him at his rooms two hours before the steamer was to sail; both ticket and luggage were all ready.

On the appointed day and at the given hour, she and Marie appeared. Ragni's luggage had been sent on board early in the morning and the carriage ordered and paid for. Nothing was to be seen in the rooms that called to mind a departure; but the way he received her made her afraid that something was brewing. Formerly he had been so self-contained--partly, too, because Marie was always present--now he embraced Ragni with all the tenderness he was capable of, and seemed as though he could not let her go. His grief had no regard for others; neither did he seek to hide anything, but, with both her hands in his, and gazing into her eyes, he told her hurriedly that her luggage had been sent on board; the steamer would sail in two hours; and here was the ticket.

She understood directly that this was the choice between him and everything else--there was no time to reflect. And that was how he gained the day. At first she stood there in speechless helplessness; then she crept close up to him and stayed there. He kissed her "welcome;" they held each other in a close embrace and wept. The servant saw someone coming outside the windows and drew down the blinds, so there was only a dim light in the room; and they, too, heard Marie crying in the next room. Their embrace gradually became a whispered conversation, at first interrupted, but then accompanied by subdued sobbing, which was checked and began again, like music with sourdine. There were whispers of the day when he would journey after her, never again to part from her; and whispers of how true a friend he would be to her; that their future was worthy of sacrifice now; that both his and her letters should be like diaries--short, hurried words of endless love, all from him; hers was the weeping, sourdine-like.

Although this was the hour of departure, this hour they spent together now, it was the first time that they had so completely and undisturbedly shown their devotion for each other. The novelty of it shone in upon their grief till there seemed to be a sunny haze around them. Soon her hushed sobbing became a whisper; the first time she spoke he wanted to look at her, but she would not allow it. If he would sit quite still and not look at her, then she would tell him something. He was the white pasha! She would not tell him what she meant by it, it would take too long; but she had been waiting for the white pasha from the time she was a child; that is to say, since her father died; she was then twelve years old. She had suffered much, most of all when she came home from Berlin and had not sufficient courage to play in public; but neither would she tell him about that; it would take too long. Always she had dreamt of this white pasha; ah, if he would but come! She was quite confident that he would come. Even when she went down to the "whales," she knew he would follow her; he would find the way. Once she had thought that Rendalen was the white pasha; but, as it turned out, he was not; he had moved away to make room for the real one to

come. The first evening they two had met in the silent falling snow. Why should they have met there? She had looked at him then and thought, wonderingly: Is he the white pasha? The next time they met he had carried little Juanita, and then she felt almost certain that none other would have thought of that. But then everything seemed to have come so rapidly, and it was all so different from what she had imagined. He asked in a whisper if she would tell him what had made her go down to the "whales" a year ago; she shuddered when he asked her. And even after her marriage, did she still expect the white pasha to come? More eagerly than ever. Had she not known then what marriage was? She pressed closer to him and was silent.

Although he was just on the verge of learning what he most wished to know, he stopped.

He told her that it was arranged so that Rendalen was to meet Ragni on board; the former was going home for a few days and would take care of her. Then they got up.

Would Kallem not take her to the steamer? He put his arms round her, hid his face on her shoulder and said, he dare not. This was the hardest blow of all. For a while she was quite overcome; then they sat down again and took leave of each other, a long, harrowing farewell. Marie was on thorns. He would have taken her down to the carriage; but Marie forbade it most decidedly; they must not be seen together by anyone.

He heard the carriage drive away, but did not see it, and in all the succeeding years he looked back upon that moment as the most terrible he had ever experienced.

He did not go out to see the steamer sail away in the distance; but in the afternoon he went down to the place where she had lain.

From there he went for a long walk--and timed it so that her aunt should see him. It was part of his plan.

For a time this kept all suspicion away from him. No one could suppose that the person who had arranged Ragni's flight and who was the cause of it, would come to

the front so soon.

Everyone who remembers this event, will remember, too, how severely she was condemned. A stranger, shy, and without relations, she had left no remembrance of herself--unless it were of her poetical playing so full of song; and that could not plead for her now. A year ago she had undertaken to live for her dead sister's children; and now she had forsaken them. The blind man whom she had married was her own choice; she had had no difficulties with him.

If she regretted it, why not say so openly? Why behave in that sly, underhand way?

It was hard for Kallem to listen to all this; had he ruined her reputation? Already everyone took it for granted that she had had a "liaison" with someone; and the hour was not far distant when it would be asserted that he was the guilty one.

He met the children with Marie outside the university one day, and they both rushed straight at him. What would he not have given had it been Ragni who came smiling after them? Of course he took the children into a confectioner's and heard them tell how "mamma had gone away in a large ship," "mamma was coming back for Christmas with new dresses and new dolls."

There was an illustrated paper lying on the table; Juanita took it into her head that all the ladies in the pictures were "mamma;" when her sister said no, she just moved her little finger on to another, "that's mamma!"

That same day Kallem had been present at an unsuccessful operation; a mishap occurred and the patient nearly bled to death. His nerves were so upset at this time that it made a great impression on him. But when he left the children and went to his dinner, it seemed to him as though he were the unsuccessful operator. He had wished to set Ragni free, but he had done it badly, and now her good name was bleeding to death. Social life altogether was a network of muscles, sinews, and veins....

He was sitting in the university library a few days later, reading and studying some

plates in front of him, when he looked up to see Ole Tuft, fresh and smiling, before him. He did not know where Kallem was living now, and so had gone to find him here. Kallem got up and went out with him.

None of Kallem's fierce courage remained to threaten his brother-in-law; he no longer desired to half kill him, not even to look reproachfully at him; and he would be more than satisfied if Ole did not cast reproachful glances at him. Probably Ole knew, as all must know who were in any way connected with the event, that Edward Kallem was the sinner. He must have heard it from Josephine, who would hear it from her father--or, was he mistaken? Was there not a mixture of doubt in Ole's friendliness? A suspicion as to his thorough honorableness? A warning that such a beginning could never lead to victory? Or, was all this hearty friendliness sincere, genuine "brotherly love"--fostered by a young theologian's obedience to the command: "Love one another?"

Ole came to announce that he had finished his studies and was going home; his joy was great. He asked if he should take any message; he said he hoped soon to begin his "work;" he hinted at what then would happen; the way was clear before him and the goal was not a small one. All who passed in and out of the library stopped to look at the good-looking young fellow.

Edward stood bare-headed up on the library steps, as Ole Tuft, in his heavy sort of way, went slouching across the square. This much was true: there went a man who was sure in himself; his beginning was thorough and complete, as was his nature.

MANHOOD

I.

"----Justification has its origin in the mercy of God. It cannot have it in the sinner or his moral struggles with self; for he is unjust. And as such he neither deserves it nor

can he lay claim to it. God's sublime will alone can justify him."

The clergyman walked backwards and forwards, learning by heart from the written sheets he held in his hand. The sun was shining brightly in at both windows; they looked to the southwest and were wide open; a milky whiteness seemed to come through the furthest window and shed itself over the gray varnished floor; fluttering aspen-leaves were reflected on the window; the aspen-trees stood trembling by the railing outside on the road. The scent of auriculas, lilacs, and laburnums streamed in from the garden; he recognised each particular scent floating through the air; for he had planted both trees and flowers himself; they were his pets. If the breeze were a little stronger, regardless of everything, it would waft through the whole garden a powerful whiff from the budding birches and fresh pine-needles on the fir-trees which stood outside his domain; each time followed by a whiff of all sorts of things from the open fields; there was a smell of growing.

Hush!

"----What makes God so merciful to the poor unjust man, who can do nothing by himself? It is His unfathomable love for sinners, His unmerited loving-kindness, that makes him so."

The steamer whistled for the third time; no, this was irresistible, he must watch the steamer as it steamed away from the pier in a long curve, and out across the lake, cutting the mirror-like water in two; the larger share fell to the islands yonder, the lesser to the shore here by the town. He took up his telescope from his desk. The pier down below was full of many-colored parasols, with a mixture of men's hats, mostly dark in colour, and here and there were linen hoods and kerchiefs, oftenest several of them together.

He heard steps to the right in the sand; they came from his mother's garden and were coming to this one--steps of a grown-up person and two small child's steps to one of the other's. "I say, mother, what has the steamer got inside its stomach?" "Ha, ha!"

Then there came a woman who gave one the impression of great power and strength. A powerful throat and full chest, exceptionally well made; a dark-looking face, rather large and with a hooked nose; the hair was almost black. She had on a cream-colored muslin dress spotted with bright-red flowers; it was made with a red silk yoke and a belt of the same stuff and colour. It was a striking contrast to her dark complexion, black hair, and clear eyes; she showed her appreciation of the warm spring day by her consummate brilliancy of colouring. But directly she saw the smiling Melancthon face in the window, she let down her red parasol between them. She led her little boy by the hand, a pretty little fellow about four years old, with fair hair and a face like the face of him standing in the window. The boy dropped his mother's hand, opened the gate between the two gardens, and ran past to open the next gate out to the road. As his wife passed by, the clergyman whispered: "I congratulate you! You are charming!" But there was a bitter sweetness in the tone. Ought a clergyman's wife to dress as she did?

Without lowering her parasol, she walked on to the open gate and along the road down toward the town; the little boy hastened to shut the gate and ran after her. "Where are you going?--Down to see!" shouted the boy as he ran on. The back of her neck seen under her hat, her figure against the sunlight, her walk, the bright colours ... the clergyman stood in the window drumming on the sill and whistling noiselessly. His glistening eyes continued to follow her--till he got up, giving a powerful push to the sill with all five fingers.

"----God does not punish, He is long-suffering, He wishes to save. But not as the leader of an army gives quarter, or a king grants an amnesty (perhaps they won't all understand 'amnesty;' should I say--oblivion?... No, that's not enough; 'merciful oblivion;' well then--); but not as the leader of an army gives quarter or a king grants merciful oblivion; not like that does God judge; no, that would be contrary to God's eternal holiness. Justification is certainly an act of mercy, but it is also an act of judgment. It needs a fundamental law, that is, the claims of the law, which is God's

own, must be fulfilled."

Now this was decidedly very juridical.

He looked down into the book which lay open on the desk between the two windows; he compared it with the one he held in his hand. All the while he listened to the roar of the steamer which came cutting in across the lake. He felt obliged to look out of the furthest window, and the result was that unconsciously he sat himself down there. The sun was shining on the steamer's white awning, a line of foam stretched between shore and island like a rope; not the tiniest cloud was in the sky, so that the smoke rose up against a clear background and the noise of the steamer was heard distinctly. The clergyman looked from the steamer to the town, to the shore, across the lake, and towards the hills away on the other side of the lake; the snow still lay on most of the distant blue hills. The noise of the steamer seemed to fill everything, like another sermon following upon his own. The modest fragrance coming from his own little garden attracted his eyes from the greater to the less. Little Edward and he had done it all together, that is to say, he had really done it, and little Edward had been there to make mischief. The minister examined first the beds on which as yet nothing had come up, then he looked at those that had been first finished, they already wanted weeding. Little Edward could very well help with that. Tiresome, very; but he had promised himself that nobody but he should touch the garden this year; bending is a healthy thing, it causes the gall to mix freely with the blood. His thoughts turned unconsciously to his wife; when would she come to him with a glass of wine and a bit of cake? It is in the nature of women to guess our weaknesses and to be lenient to them. He looked up, she had disappeared; he then stood bolt upright:

"----The claims of the law, which are God's own, must be fulfilled. If a sinner could do this by himself, then there would be no mercy in justification; consequently it must be by the help of another.

"But even this atonement by another must come of God's saving mercy, if it is not to do away with justification (oh, how juridical!). If this work of mercy is to be a benefit to all, then the atonement must be extended to the whole of sinful humanity. If only the Almighty Himself can bring about a like atonement, a like reconciliation and justification.

"It is a basis of faith for all Christians, that this doctrine of the salvation of the world, and the forgiveness of sins of the whole of humanity, once for all, are obtained through Jesus Christ, and that each individual sinner can reap the benefit thereof."

He looked up. Surely the steamer should be ... yes, there it is. He went to the window and remained standing there. The ship shot out in a straight line towards the headland, which stretched so far that it almost reached to the island. The large town which lay to the right, and of which the headland formed the nose, stretched itself out almost the whole way across; the sea lay between. Farm upon farm lay in the sun, verdant and fruitful; here and there were large gaps that showed the distance between the farms. But that side which stretched out toward the island appeared to be nothing but a flat tongue of land; the steamer had to go through the narrow strait out yonder and disappear in the large bay beyond.

What a puffing and groaning! Just as if nature had learnt to speak! That is to say, the entire surroundings, not only a part of them. Supposing a string were strung across the whole country and a bow were to be drawn over it, it would be like the sound of the steamer's noise----

Hush!

"----God has so willed it, and has ordained it so, that a sinner can be justified by His grace, through Christ who has fulfilled the law for us. The merits of Christ and the righteousness of Christ have paid all our debts. Everyone can in a way take a share for himself of the righteousness that Christ has gained for the world." No, stop a bit,

is not that going rather far? Still that is about the meaning of it.

Soon after this he lay stretched out at the window, leaning on his elbows, as if he had no intention of ever getting up again. As Josephine had not returned with the little one, he gazed down the road and over the sea and island, thinking of the islet that lay out there to the left; he could not see it from here; but he knew it was there, and that it was so amusing. His thoughts flew rapidly from the mountains to the steamer again; it was struggling forward towards the little strait. The island out yonder had a garden hat on, and now it seemed as if a veil were added as well from the smoke of the steamboat. Surely the wind was blowing from a different quarter out there? No, now it seems the same over here too. The wind chops and changes at this time of year. No scent from trees, gardens, or fields was wafted towards him now, we shall probably soon see the fan of the screw drawing black lines through the water. To the left, down by the sea, an engine whistle screamed shrilly; perchance a train was about to start, or perhaps they were only shunting a luggage train.

Good heavens, how quiet everything was otherwise! He could hear children's voices from afar, even the very vibrations were audible. Hammering and sawing could be heard every now and then in the new house at the corner of the beach street and the road that turned up this way; the sound seemed to proceed from an empty space. The staccato puffs of the groaning steamer could still be faintly heard in the distance. The house he was in lay in a free and open space, it was therefore that he had so extensive a view and could hear everything so distinctly; all this, however, would be over when once the fields were parcelled off for building purposes.

He fell into deep thought on this subject; would it not be wise for him to buy up land? He wished to do so very much; but house and ground and everything they had belonged to his wife. His own little fortune was invested in the tiny house and garden to the right, where his mother lived.

There are many advantages in having a rich wife, even though the marriage contract may leave her free to dispose of her fortune as she chooses; many little comforts are gained which make life pleasanter and work easier; besides it certainly increases one's authority--particularly a clergyman's. Much good may be done which others have to deny themselves, and this may be turned to power. He had felt this and had felt the comfort of it. It pleased him.

But----. All "buts" proceed from the person who has the disposal of the fortune. "Just as the congregation is subject to Christ----" Hush!--Again he began to read, aloud this time: "An outer foundation for justification is therefore that Jesus has fulfilled the laws; the inner condition is that the sinner believe this. However much God may be reconciled with the world, He can grant His grace to that sinner only who is attached to Christ through faith in Him as his Saviour."

The book was lowered, the minister was not conscious of what he was reading. There was a certain passage in Ephesians that made him pause. If the wife be not subject in all things, ... now, just the fact of the wife having the disposal of her fortune, would sow seeds of dissent.

He was so firmly persuaded of this and could produce such convincing proofs, that he neither saw nor heard a thing, near or distant--except as though he were listening to another person's account of it. He drummed on the window-sill and looked down the road. Two newly awakened butterflies circling round each other above and below his window, had not the smallest idea of all the difficulties that can ensue when one has a fortune and not the disposal of it. A little further away, shaded by the boy's footstool which had stood there forgotten for some days, a graceful declytera with its thin stalk covered with little red bells, rang her wedding-bells, a wedding without the slightest regard to the epistle to the Ephesians, V. 24. Therefore it was overlooked by the minister. Not even the bees belonging to Nergård the gardener--up here perhaps for the first time this year (would they remember the way,

now that the wind had changed and the scent of the flowers gave them warning)--not even the bees did he hear buzzing round the new blossoms shaded by the house. Matrimonial difficulties as regards Ephesians V. 24, can weave a covering for the head even though the sun's rays be shining on the hair. His eyes were blind as the wind itself as he let them wander over the town, yonder on the gentle slope, with its three shades of green, the meadows, the corn-fields, and the woods. Just at that moment there lay a long black stripe across the water, and some single wavy lines; he was in the midst of it all, but saw nothing. A cow tethered over the way was lowing for water, water! All around him seemed in a state of invisible expectancy ... until the despairing cry of a child seemed to pierce the warm spring air, ... one single scream. He seemed to hear each vibration, it was like a cutting hand laid on his chest; he started up, listening breathlessly for the next. Would it never come, that next scream; the child must have disappeared after the first ... no, there it is again. The first scream had been despairing, this next was horror itself, and the next one too and the following one!... The minister stood there quite pale, with all his senses on the alert. He heard rapid footsteps across the sand to the right; it was his mother who came to the gate between the two gardens; she was a thin old woman, a black cap covering her chalk-white hair, which framed in a cautious and dry-looking face.

"No," exclaimed the minister, "no, God be praised, that is not Edward; that flourish in the crying was not his; no, there are no flourishes about him; he bellows right out, he does!"

"Whoever it is, it's a bad business," answered she.

"You are right, mother," and in his heart he prayed for the little one crying so pitifully. But when he had done that, he gave thanks that it was not his boy, which was quite allowable.

A tall man in light clothes and with a Stanley hat on, was walking up the road while this was going on. He kept looking at the house and garden; the minister looked at

him too, but did not recognize him. He bent his way to that side of the road, straight up to the steps--a tall man with short, sun-burnt face, spectacles, and a peculiar rapid way of walking; but, in all the world?... The minister drew back from the window just as the stranger reached the steps, which he must have taken at a bound, for now there was a footstep in the passage. Then came a knock.

"Come in!"

The door opened wide, but the stranger still stood outside.

"Edward!"

The other made no answer. "What, Edward? you here! without first letting me know? Is it really you?" The minister advanced to meet him, gave him both hands and drew him in. "Welcome! dear old fellow, you are heartily welcome!" His face was red with delight.

Edward's sunburnt hands pressed those of his brother-in-law in answer, his eyes glistened behind his spectacles; but he had not yet spoken.

"Have you not a word to say, old fellow?" exclaimed the minister, dropping his hands and laying his on his shoulders. "Did you not meet your sister?"

"Yes, it was she who told me where you lived."

"And did you run and leave her? You wanted to get on quicker? I suppose the boy walked too slowly for you?" asked the minister, his kind eyes looking into the other's with unmixed joy.

"That was not the only reason. What a pretty place you have here!"

"I am sure your house will be just as nice, although I would have preferred this north side of the town to the centre."

"But there was no choice left me."

"No, that is quite true. As you were going to buy the infirmary, you were obliged to buy the doctor's house as well; for they go together. Everyone thinks it was very

cheap. And convenient in every way, and a good deal of ground to it! What a long time you have been away! A long time at a stretch.--And why did you not write now, and let me know? Good heavens, how could I not know you directly! You are really almost totally unchanged." He looked at his brother-in-law's thin face, which seemed to have gained a milder expression. Then he went on talking. They walked up and down beside each other, sometimes standing together at the window. Then Edward turned to him:

"But you, Ole, you are not unchanged."

"Indeed! I thought I was. In fact, everyone says so."

"No, you have got something of a clergyman's manner about you."

"A clergyman? Ha, ha! you mean that I have got stouter? I assure you I do everything a fellow can to prevent it; I work in the garden, I take long walks; but all to no purpose!... You see, my wife takes too good care of me. And everyone here is much too good to me."

"You should do as I do."

"And what do you do?"

"I walk on my hands."

"Ha, ha, ha, on my hands? I, in my position?"

"In your position? If you walked up the church on your hands, that would be a nice sermon!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Can you really walk on your hands?"

"Yes, I say, can?" At the same moment he proceeded to walk on his hands; his short, loose tussore silk coat fell down over his head, the minister gazed at it and at the back of his waistcoat, and at the piece of shirt which showed between it and the band of his trousers, at part of the braces, and lastly at the trousers down to the stockings, and leather shoes with thick, gutta-percha soles. Kallem ran round the

room in no time. Ole hardly knew how to take it. Kallem stood panting on his feet again, took off and wiped his spectacles, and began to examine the bookshelves closely in his short-sighted way.

The minister could distinctly feel that there was something the matter. Something must have put his brother-in-law out. Could his sister have said anything to wound him? No, dear me; what could it be? She who admired him so greatly? He would ask right out what it was; why not have it cleared up on the spot? Kallem had put his spectacles on and passed across to the desk; a woodcut of Christ by Michael Angelo hung just above it; he glanced casually at it, and then looked down at the open pamphlet lying on the desk. And before the minister was sufficiently recovered to ask any questions, Kallem said: "Johnsen's systematic theology? I bought it at once at Kristianssand."

"That book? You bought it?"

"Yes, it was never to be had before. However, now it lay on the counter. It was just like a new landchart."

"Yes, it is not like Norway any longer," said the minister. "The most of it is nothing but impossible jurisdiction."

Astonished at the minister's answer, Kallem turned towards him. "Is this way of thinking general among the younger Norwegian theologians?"

"Yes. I laid it there so as to find out to-morrow all the different opinions that exist on the doctrine of propitiation."

"Ah, I see, that is a capital plan." Again Kallem looked out of the window, for the fourth or fifth time. There could be no doubt that something was the matter.

"There they are!" he said. He was standing at the furthest window, and Ole Tuft in front at the other; from it he could see his wife's parasol above her muslin dress; she was walking slowly, and held her little boy by the hand; he was evidently talking incessantly, for his face was turned upwards towards her, whilst he jogged along the

uneven road. They kept to the other side. But here, just by the hedge, a lady was walking. She raised her green parasol (what a beauty it was!). She was not as tall as Josephine, but slight; she was looking about and turned slightly; she was fair, with reddish hair, and had a tartan travelling dress on; it had a decidedly foreign cut; she must surely be a stranger. It was not at all wonderful that Edward ran on in front; he wished to be alone and leave them by themselves.

"Who can that lady be walking with Josephine? Did she come by the same steamer as you?"

"Yes, she did."

"Do you know her, then?"

"Yes; she is my wife."

"Your wife? Are you a married man?"

He said this with such a loud voice that both the ladies looked up. In went his head into the room; but nothing but vacant air met him there; the doctor's head was still outside. It was from out there the answer came. "I have been married for six years."

"For six years?" Out popped the minister's head again and stared at Kallem with the greatest astonishment. Six years, he thought. "How long ago is it since?... My dear fellow, it is scarcely six years since?..."

The ladies were now close by; the strange lady walking by the furthest hedge, while Josephine and the boy had crossed over to the other side. "I say, mother, why do little boys fall and knock their heads?" No answer. "I say mother, why don't they fall on their legs?" No answer. "Because the upper part of the body is heaviest, my boy!" It was Kallem who said that. They all three looked up.

He left the window to go and meet them, the minister followed after; but he stopped at the bottom step.

The strange lady's eyes were full of tears when Kallem joined them; in vain she tried

to hide it by looking about her on all sides. Josephine was cold and stiff. Little Edward ran up to his father and told him how Nicholas Andersen had climbed up the "ladder" (the boy pointed down to the new house) and "then fallen down." And "the new lady" had tied up his head with her handkerchief. This did not seem to interest the minister as much as the boy expected, so he ran round the house and in to tell his grandmother all about it.

"I suppose I need not introduce her?" said Edward Kallem, with his hand in his wife's and looking at the minister. The latter tried to find something to say, but failed and glanced over at Josephine, who did not look as if she were willing to help him.

It was hardly a week ago since the zealous minister had written condemning the numerous divorces that occurred, followed by fresh marriages; it was an article in the Morgenblad entitled "Marriage or Free-love?" And he had shown, by the most convincing proofs, that, according to the Scripture, the only ground for divorce was infidelity between man and wife. Whatever man could convict his wife of adultery, was free and could marry again; but if any man divorced his wife for other reasons and got married again during her lifetime, then the first marriage was valid and not the other one. Hardly a week ago he had written all this, and with the full consent of his wife. And just because this case of Kallem and Ragni Kule was still so fresh in his memory, he had written how the wife of a sick man had grown weary of the path in life chosen for her by God, and had had secret love-dealings with another man; but as soon as it was discovered, she had left him and got a divorce. Supposing, he wrote, that that woman were to marry the man who had aided her in deceiving her husband? who could call such a marriage as that aught but continued adultery?

He had written it word for word. His wife entirely agreed with him; beforehand, she hated the woman who had captivated her brother. And now they both stood there before her, and Ragni was her brother's wife.

This reunion could hardly have been more unfortunate. They had both been so

certain that he was now quite steady. He was a learned man now, and had been offered a professorship; he was in fact the one of all the younger doctors who was most thought of by the others.

This was a dreadful disappointment! And think what it would be to live together with them and introduce them to their circle of friends in the congregation as Mr. and Mrs. Kallem? after putting his name to a declaration that their marriage was not valid!

Of course Kallem must have read it, he who was so eager to keep up with the Norwegian bent of the times, that he actually read Johnsen's dogmas.... In all probability, he would first and foremost read the papers. He had read it, of course, and that explained all. There she stood, not knowing which way to look, but pressing closer to him. And he----? His right arm was round her, as though he wished to proclaim she was his. She held her parasol up in her right hand and persisted in trying to screen herself, but she could not bear it for long, she had to look for her handkerchief, and not finding her own, took possession of Kallem's.

Mechanically the minister said: "Shall we not go in?"

They did as he wished. He showed them over the house, while Josephine went to get some refreshment ready. From the study, which looked into the garden, they went into the large drawing-room looking on to the road, into the drawing-room behind that again, and from there to the kitchen at the north side of the house, and to which there was a separate entrance; on the same side was the larder, and a spare bed-room out to the garden, next to the minister's study, and with a balcony in front corresponding to the steps at the other end of the facade. Upstairs were several bed-rooms, etc. It barely took five minutes to show them over the house. Nothing but a few necessary remarks on the part of the minister, and from Kallem a sneering allusion to the minister's occupying the spare bed-room, while Josephine was upstairs with her boy; a similar speech later on, as he stood before a rare collection

of celebrated theologians hanging round Luther's portrait on the largest wall of the room. He refused the refreshments Josephine offered them, said good-bye and went.

Ragni followed them about like an invisible being. As they were going away, her long, narrow, hand whisked through the hands of her brother- and sister-in-law like an ermine through a hole in the wall. Her eyes glanced timidly at them like the shadow of a wing. The minister went out to the steps with them, Josephine remaining behind at the big window.

Kallem walked so quickly that Ragni was obliged to take a little hop at every third step; the minister stood and looked after them. This rapid walking increased her agitation so that, when they had got about half-way between the beach and the minister's house, she asked him to stop. She began to cry.

Kallem was surprised at this display of feeling so different to his own; he was very angry. But he soon understood that she was probably crying on account of his behaviour. He drew her up to the railing, and leaning his back against it, said: "Have I not acted rightly?"

"You were so cruel--oh, so cruel, and not only to him and to her, but to me too; yes, especially to me. You never looked at me, never paid the slightest attention to my being there."

"But, my dear, it was just on your account."

"Well, then I would rather go away again! I cannot bear that!" She threw herself in his arms.

"My dear! did you see what Josephine looked like?"

"Of course I did," answered Ragni, and her head peeped up again, her hat falling off, and her hair tumbled. "She will kill me some day!" and again took refuge in his arms.

"Well, well," said he, "she will not succeed in doing you any harm. But am I not to

fight your battles?"

Forth she peeped again: "Not in that way! I would never have thought you were like that! It was so--so unrefined, Edward," and she took and shook him by the coat-collar.

"Listen to me," said he, quietly; "what that fellow has written about us, that is unrefined. And her silence? I thought that worse than anything he had written."

To this she answered nothing. After a pause he heard: "I am not suited for this."

He bent over her head; her hat had fallen off, but they neither of them noticed it; he whispered softly through her reddish hair; she must not give in at once, nor speak of dying or going away again. "We must take it in a more manly way than that, don't you think so too?"

"Yes, yes." Her rough head peeped out again: "But you must remember that now I am with you; you cannot behave quite as if you were alone."

No, he quite saw that, and stood there with a guilty conscience.

At the same time Josephine was again in the room looking on to the road; there was only one window there, but a larger one than was usual, and she stood leaning her head against the window-post. The minister stood behind her. He considered it an untoward accident, his having written that in the Morgenblad.

"Your brother said he had been married six years?"

Josephine turned right round. But after she had thought the matter over, she only said: "Rubbish!" and turned to the window again. The minister thought too that it must be a mistake. They could not have been married before she was legally divorced.

"He was always acting a part," said he; "he took to walking on his hands." She turned towards him again, with eyes wide open with astonishment. "He walked right round the study on his hands," the minister assured her. "He advised me to walk up

to the altar in that way. Well, as he even ridicules Luther, I ought certainly to be able to endure his ridicule."

She evidently did not wish him to speak of this meeting at the present moment; it caused her too much pain. He retired to his study, and looked anything but pleased whilst he was filling his pipe.

Josephine had reckoned so much on meeting and living with her brother. She would never listen to the slightest insinuation of a possibility of things turning out differently to what she expected. Perhaps her present suffering was wholesome for her.

Had he himself acted rightly to-day? He certainly thought he had. He only hoped he would always be able to take things as meekly; he was quite certain this was not the last of it.

He enjoyed his pipe and took up his sermon again; but thoughts about Josephine would keep cropping up. He never could feel the same confidence in their married life as others had. She was irritable at times, and this last outbreak had been a bad one. Without doubt, because her thoughts had been entirely taken up by the expected visitor.

Hush!

"----Conversion is a spontaneous proceeding, conclusive forever. All our sins are washed away; we are as pure and holy in God's sight as Christ Himself!"

II.

These two who had just made friends on their way down the road, walked on arm in arm.

Andersen, the mason, was standing on the scaffolding at the corner of the road and beach street; he was a large man, with a long brown beard, and he had blue glasses on; he was covered from top to toe with lime. He saw the fair lady again who had

helped his little boy, and as she was walking arm in arm with the man with spectacles whom he had just seen go up yonder, he concluded it must be the new doctor; the minister was his brother-in-law, and they were now coming from his house. Andersen left off working and took off his hat to them; Ragni stopped her husband, and Andersen could remark she was saying something. He silenced the hammering and asked what the lady was saying? She wanted to know if the little boy had fallen asleep? Yes, he was asleep; but they would be glad if the doctor would have a look at him when he awoke; "for this is the new doctor, I suppose?"

"You are right, it is he."

The people who were in the house came to the window at once, also a few in the neighbouring house; a passer-by stopped and stared at them, then moved on and told the tale all the way down the street. Andersen took the opportunity of mentioning his bad eyes; the doctor would also have to look at them presently. As they walked on they had spectators from open windows and down the street; they got many a greeting. They were young; it did not require much to make them forget what had so recently happened, and they began to feel that they might live very comfortably here.

Amongst those who greeted them was a very young man with masses of hair, fair, arched features, slightly built, but tall; there was something refined and rather shy about him. As they looked at him he blushed.

"By Jove! you have made a conquest there," whispered Kallem.

Shortly after they met a very odd-looking fellow, slouching along in a knitted jacket, with a leathern apron in front; dusty black hair, an unwashed face, indeed it was begrimed with dirt; he was carrying some tools in his thin, narrow hands, which were appended to unusually long arms that swung in a kind of bow behind him; had they swung both together they must undoubtedly have come into collision. He wore no hat, his short clipped hair showed the entire shape of his head. His forehead was

neither broad nor high, but peculiarly well-shaped; long in the jaw, with projecting bones. His small, cold eyes and tightly pressed lips gave him a cynical look. His nose was flat and small, and his chin pointed.

"Do just look at that man!" whispered Kallem.

"Disgusting!" she replied.

The man now passed close beside them, scanning them carefully. Kallem returned the glance, and when they had gone past they turned to have a mutual look at each other. An old woman came hobbling along.

"Who is that man?" asked Kallem. She looked at him and then after the man.

"It is Kristen Larssen."

"Is he a locksmith?"

"What kind do you say?"

"Locksmith!"

"Yes, he is. But he is also a watchmaker and gunsmith; in fact, everything you like."

The beach street was open to the sea, and without even a stone wall in front of it. Things lay rotting in the sea as also on land. There was an unfinished appearance about the whole town; a large house next to a small one, then a house built of stone, then a wooden one, all of them erected in haste and as cheaply as possible. The houses were not even in a line, the street was on the whole scarcely bearable. The people they met were neither town nor country folk, they were "wary but friendly," as Kallem said; "medium goods."

They had now arrived at the market-place, where the road turned up to the church, tall and graceful. It was here they had met Josephine on their way up; for up to the right by the church, in a park, lay their house with the garden in front; they could, however, not see it from where they were.

The street divided just in front of the church, and continued to run on either side of

it; their home lay on the road to the right. As they came nearer the church, they could discern the park behind their own house, and in it the gables of the large hospital. At last--they were walking slowly, without uttering a single word--at last the large garden appeared, and their own house! It was a large wooden building in the Swiss style, rather too broad, with big windows all open now.

Steps led down from the veranda to an open space strewn with sand. The flower-garden was nearest to this, then the kitchen-garden further on, and at the side, down toward the town, lay the fruit-garden, a very large one. The two owners looked at it simultaneously. Here it was! For six long years had they each of them worked for this; they had dreamed of it in various forms and ways, but never quite like this; they had fixed it at many a place, but never just at this stop. Not one of all their dream-pictures was in what now lay before them! They both turned and surveyed the breadth and beauty of the landscape, smiling the while at each other. It was strange that just at that moment there was not a creature to be seen, not a sound or a noise that recalled anything, either far or near. Just those two and their home! The one saw exactly the same as the other saw, the sight and the feelings of the one were rendered more intense by the knowledge that the other shared them too. Ragni took her arm out of Kallem's, went over to the railing, which was of juniper branches, she reached through and gathered some grass and leaves; she came back with this in her hand, and fastened it in his coat. He espied a tuft of cowslips further up, went and pushed his hand through, and gathered them; she took them and gathered more; it looked very pretty when there were many together.

At the side of the house and in the yard at the back, lay packing-cases, furniture, straw, sawdust, mats. Ragni's grand piano had just been taken out of the case and the legs screwed on; but there was no one visible.

A large dove-cot stood out in the yard. "Fancy, if pigeons came flying here now? We must keep pigeons!"

"But, fancy, if a dog came running to us now. We must keep a dog!"

At this side there was no gate; but on the road which divided the park and garden. They stopped there, and turned once more to look across the wide landscape.

Here, in this rich country, the richest and sunniest in all the land, their own home was to them as the centre of the compass. Ragni glanced across to see if the minister's house was visible from there; but not a bit of it! Kallem guessed what she was looking for, and smiled. Through the open windows they heard the work-people in the rooms; they went down the veranda steps with much noise and laughter; they came out there and went straight up to the piano, not noticing the two who stood there. Then they carried off the piano to the veranda and went tramping up the steps again. Kallem and Ragni looked behind at the park; there were beautiful tall trees, through the trunks of which one could see the hospital, a large wooden house built on a stone wall or foundation, and with large, many-paned windows. Then they went through the gate into the garden and down to their own house.

With the exception of one little outhouse on this near side, the building lay free on all sides.

The fruit-trees were just beginning to blossom, so it must be a sheltered spot. And the garden! Ragni never gave it a thought that this well-stocked garden was Josephine's work, she only looked forward to herself taking charge of it. The house needed painting; and it must have a different colour than this common-looking yellow. It was their house, their home! Kallem stamped three times on the ground, it was his too. He wanted to go in there, but she wished to go round to the front and up the veranda steps. So they went round by the straw and packing-cases, and peeped in at the windows. The house was low in comparison with the length and breadth of it, the roof projected very much, lying heavily on the house. But that was a good thing.

The veranda was out of proportion, too, but it was broad, and the steps up to it were easy.

Arm in arm they walked up, but were met first of all by a disappointment; the entrance door, which was of glass, was not in the middle, but at the extreme end of the south wall of the room. But they soon saw that if the veranda was to be in the centre, it could not be otherwise; to the right there were two more rooms leading out of the drawing-room. The men who had carried in the piano came out to meet them; they understood at once who it was, and as Ragni looked at them, first the one, then all of them, took off their hat or cap. Kallem returned their greeting, Ragni escaped in to the piano which stood in the middle of the floor, took out the key and opened it, as if it had to be examined very closely and she must absolutely try if it had kept in tune. With her gloves still on, she struck the first chords of Longfellow's "Sweet Home." On hearing the first notes of this hymn to home, Kallem took his hat off. The others saw it, and supposing it to be a psalm, they did the same.

Ragni stood with her back turned, and did not therefore notice two people who came from the right--a man with a round, shining face, and behind him a little woman anxious to see and yet remain unseen. But then the door just in front of her was opened and a peasant girl looked quietly in, attracted by the sweet sounds. Ragni understood that it must be their servant come from the kitchen, and she went up to her.

"Are you Sigrid?"

Yes, it was she.

"Well, I am the doctor's wife."

"I thought so," said she, coming quite into the room. She was a stout, nice-looking girl.

"Is it the first time you are in service?" asked Kallem.

Yes, it was.

"And it is the first time we keep house," said Kallem; "it will be great fun!"

Ragni went out to the kitchen; there she saw their new dinner-service, which had just been unpacked and washed. She was not fit for more, so she went out into the passage and upstairs, to be alone. The door to their bed-room stood open just in front of her, she went in and out on the balcony over the veranda. How had she deserved such great happiness? What was all her longing, and all her work, compared to what now awaited her in a rich man's home? But there was a terror of something, through all this undeserved happiness. And here she again glanced over northward--was the minister's house visible from here? No, it was not possible to see it.

Josephine disliked her; she could feel it at once. And even if her brother thought it a shame--still he was very fond of his sister; there was something about her that he particularly admired; she was never mistaken in such matters.

Down below, Kallem went round the rooms. The two who had stood in the right-hand door had retired again, and the men were hard at work. It was a large room, there were windows in it that looked both to the church and the garden; but he thought he would propose to shut up the former. The walls were self-coloured, light gray, the ceiling pale blue with gold stars; the paint was old and faded, only the floor had been freshly painted, light gray too. The room to the left was still being papered. Goodness! were they not yet ready? Nor in the next room either? There were two people at work, the man and woman who had appeared in the doorway.

"Good-day!" said Kallem.

"Good-day!" came the answer from the round shiny face, with a Danish accent. Kallem went up to the table where the man stood cutting; the woman was standing beside, but now she sidled behind him.

"Is this your wife?"

"Yes, it is; and she is my assistant too; both wife and assistant; but for all that a proper kind of wife too." The little woman behind him giggled, though almost inaudibly. The man had prominent rolling eyes with a roguish twinkle in them.

"I fancied everything was ready."

"There are always hindrances to one's work, doctor."

She laughed heartily, but in a muffled sort of way.

"Is she Danish too?"

"No, she is Norwegian, but we get on very well together for all that."

She dived down deeper than ever, laughing continually.

The room they were in was oblong; Kallem saw directly that it was the dining-room; probably also the waiting-room for patients. The inner room, with windows both to the front and to the southeast, was of course his work-room; he would receive people there when not at the hospital. He did not go into it, but out of the dining-room and into the passage again. To the right was the kitchen door. He was met by an array of beer-bottles on the kitchen dresser; some empty, some full.

"Whose are those bottles?"

"They belong to the saddler."

"To the paper-hanger, you mean?"

Then it dawned upon Kallem what kind of "hindrances" he had alluded to; and that he was quite tipsy at that very moment, and his wife still tipsier! That was why the men had been so long before they moved in the piano; they had been treated all round.

"Will you kindly ask the Dane to come to me here?"

The girl went directly, and directly too appeared the round, shining face with hundreds of twinkles in his eye; his wife was behind him, peeping out first at one side, then at the other.

"Are those your bottles?"

"Not altogether."

"Have you gone shares with the others?"

"Yes, in drinking them."

"But did you buy them?"

"Yes, I bought the beer, but not the bottles; they are to be returned."

The woman was heard to titter.

"May I ask what is your name?"

"Sören Pedersen, that's my name."

"Look here, Sören Pedersen, will you let me buy the bottles of you?"

"Do you mean the beer?"

"Yes, the beer."

"All right, then."

"We shall have something, then, to drink to-night; for we must work all night, we must be ready to-morrow. We will help you with your work. Do you agree to that?"

"As you wish, doctor."

"Then will you kindly sup with us this evening?"

Then Kallem went upstairs in three-four strides; Ragni was out on the balcony, standing in the sun. She turned to him. He asked if she had finished her prayer? Yes, she was quite ready.

He, too, stood on the balcony, looking at the little islet at play beside the mother-island--it was visible from there--and the sea with its ripples, and the mountains yonder in distant grandeur. He looked over to the right, where the minister lived--she noticed it at once.

"They would never dare to treat us as though we were not married, eh? It will be amusing to see what they do!"

She drew him in and pointed to the colour of the walls in their bed-room; it was

exactly as she had asked for it to be, white, a dull oil-colour. Everything was to be white up there except the long curtains and hangings draped from the ceiling down over both beds, at the balcony windows, and before the door; they were blue in colour and pattern, and matched the ornamentations on the beds and the other furniture. Then she became very talkative; but Kallem wanted to see the hospital, and she thought she would like to go with him.

The first thing he wished to have altered when they stopped in front of it, inside the park, was that several beautiful old trees, that were too close to it, should be taken away. The hospital was a two-storied house, painted yellow, with exceptionally large windows, but very small panes. The ground floor of the building was brick and contained the servants' rooms and offices; it all looked very snug, with curtains in the windows and plenty of flowers standing in them. The entrance was at the left side of the house; and there was a very large yard railed in by a high fence. Kallem was pleased to see a row of shady trees by the paling; he knew that in about a fortnight he would have some American tents there for the use of the patients in summer-time.

The door was open, but no porter (concierge) to be seen; in the window there were religious books and tracts for sale. There was no notice put on the door to say when the patients might receive visits. Presently they saw the porter in the inner yard; he was an elderly man with a searching, solemn eye; he had spectacles on, but looked over the top of them and took them off directly he had taken in who it was.

"Are you the new doctor?"

"Yes."

Then he took off his hat too.

"Welcome!"

The patient he had been talking to crept on before them; he was pale and had a thick woollen scarf round his neck, even on that warm day; he kept at a distance and did

not bow. The porter accompanied them.

In the hospital there was a suite of rooms on each side of a light and airy corridor, those to the front were large and those to the yard were small, both stories were built in the same way. The porter was not only porter, but he was also steward, and the oldest inspector the house had; he therefore felt called upon to introduce the other members of the household one by one as they met them. They were all respectable-looking people, both men and women; there were two deaconesses among the latter, and they seemed the pleasantest of them all.

The first thing Kallem intended to do was to do away with the old-established typhus-fever rooms, and to build a separate typhus-pavilion for winter use. The operating-room was very light, but there must at once be a new polished floor put in. The ventilating apparatus was most faulty. With the exception of these and a few minor drawbacks--such as the small windowpanes--it was a capital house, high rooms and roomy passages, and generally airy; altogether he was well pleased.

The beds were pretty well filled, considering the time of year; tubercular disease of the lungs, his special study, was represented by three individuals, two boys and a girl about ten years old, poor, thin, waxy-pale creatures, whom he looked forward to seeing in his American tent. The late owner of the infirmary, old Dr. Kule--an uncle of Ragni's former husband--was dead; Kallem had bought it very cheap, because just at that moment there was no one else who could entertain the idea of buying. Here he would be able to arrange himself and his time exactly according to his own wishes; he had great plans. The parish gave their contribution, and a committee, consisting of the district physician and one other doctor besides, had the supervision of it; but he was entirely his own master. They were both of them quite delighted with this first visit. They went back to their own home in excellent spirits, but dreadfully hungry, took a bite of something in the kitchen and a glass of wine; thought fit to drink an extra glass on account of the important event that they were

breaking bread for the first time in their own house.

Everything in the drawing-room was topsy-turvy; but in spite of it Ragni made her way to the piano. She had often attempted translations from that foreign literature--it had been like her own for five or six years--especially translations of poetry. Slightly flushed with the wine, and just a little shy, she struck some chords--begging him not to stand before her--then again more chords, and with a small, gentle voice, she recited more than sang:

Here let us live! May our friends and our fancies, Our life's by-gone chances

Flourish and grow--

In thoughts as in things, In trees as in tones, In voices, entwining

Around us.

Here may my heart Through thee be laid bare To myself and to thee

Who wert blind--

And joyfully, sinfully, Gladden thee, wound thee; Though yearning with years For a happy reunion

With thine.

III.

The next morning they were awakened by a loud and continued noise. When they could collect their thoughts they knew it was the church bells ringing for service; they had slept very late, but then they had worked till three o'clock, that is to say, until broad daylight.

Kallem was out of bed in a second, and into the bathroom, next door, where he took a tremendous shower-bath; evidently, the former doctor had had a taste for that kind of thing! And hardly was he half dressed before he ran out onto the balcony to look at the view. He shouted in to Ragni to take her shower-bath too, and dress herself

and come out to look at it; but she had felt the water so fearfully cold yesterday, she lay there with wide-open eyes, debating as to whether she should shirk it or really venture to take it. She made up her mind to shirk, so she quickly appeared at his side in a very pretty dressing-gown, which she had thrown round her. But although she looked so sweetly at him, and eagerly began praising the view and the exquisite day, he did not forget the shower-bath. Yesterday she had solemnly promised that she would begin the very first morning; susceptible to cold as she was, she must look upon a shower-bath as her daily bread, especially up here, where the change from heat to cold was so very sudden. Therefore----! She made the most piteous face, and tried to laugh it off; but he pointed to the shower-bath--would she really break her promise? If she broke it now, this first time, she would break it too often later on. She kissed him and said he was cruel; he kissed her and said she was sweet; but how about the shower-bath? So she darted in and undid her dressing-gown, as though she meant to take the bath, but popped into bed instead. When he came in, she pulled the clothes over her head; but without more ado he took up the blanket and its contents, and carried it to the door; but she begged and implored him to let her off, and seemed so frightened that he went back with his burden. She put her arms round him and dragged him down to her; she kissed him and whispered to him, and with her sweet caresses completely defeated his logic.

The bells went on ringing and ringing, carriages drove past away from the town. Hardly had one gone by before another came. The door was open; every time the bells stopped preparatory to the well-known three peals, they could hear the flies buzzing about the room, and the birds outside. They also heard the puffing of a little steamer out on the lake; they had seen it cut across from the other coast, probably with tourists. There must be some festivity going on somewhere to account for the way people were streaming in.

There was a light southwesterly breeze, filling the room each time with sweet scents; it poured in from the fields and trees. Through the clanging of the bells one could

hear it whispering and sighing, the air seemed full of sounds.

Shortly after, they again stood on the balcony and watched the people going to church; well-packed carriages drove constantly past the church and continued upwards. The steamer came quite close; now the train whistled too. They both caught sight of two swallows that were evidently playing with their own shadows in the sand outside the veranda. They flew above and past each other, the shadows on the sand imitating each swoop; the birds wore down close to the sand and then a little way above; whenever they flew too high and the shadows disappeared, they darted down again to find them. She whispered to him that next year they would put out boxes for them to build in.

They finished dressing and went down to lunch. Sören Pedersen and his wife had arrived some time ago, and had their meal; they were now hard at work.

Then they heard that everyone was bound for the neighbouring parish, where the clergyman, Pastor Meek, was to celebrate his fifty years jubilee, and to preach a farewell sermon. Foot passengers had been on the go all the morning; now came those in carriages; and a steamer full of people from the opposite coast. Meek had had this same living all these fifty years--"a truly delightful man."

Kallem and Ragni were lunching in the big room; but their lunch was interrupted by someone knocking, and in came a thin, elderly man, smiling and noiseless, with horn spectacles on his nose; this was Dr. Kent, who was temporary manager of the hospital; he came from there just now. They both got up. He had a soft, pleasant voice, and a knowing smile accompanied all he said. He sat down at a little distance from them while they went on with their lunch, and gave a short account of the patients over at the "establishment," and of the sanitary state of both town and country. He answered dryly and briefly all questions as to those functionaries Kallem would have to call upon, as to the leaders in town and parish matters, and those of the local government board he ought to know. The purest business matters

became pleasant when spoken of by Dr. Kent. When his gig came to the door--he was going on his rounds out in the country--Kallem asked leave to drive with him; but Ragni at once did the same too. So they hired a larger carriage and soon they were all three seated in it. Just as they were starting, Ragni remembered that the piano wanted tuning slightly, and she asked Sören Pedersen if he knew anyone who could tune at any rate for the present? Yes; there was Kristen Larssen.

So the drive began with an account of Kristen Larssen. Kent told them he was born up in one of the worst and most remote districts, and had been punished by the law for some trifling slip--he thought it was because he had called a tune he played, "the forgiveness of sins." Kristen Larssen was an inventor too; there was a knitting machine much in use now which was his invention, and various kinds of tools. He was a cold man--cold as iron in the winter time. Sören Pedersen and his wife were the only people he had anything to do with. And who were those two? He knew nothing about their "antecedentia;" she was from these parts, he was from Funen. They were both clever at their work; but people soon found out that they drank. The minister tried to correct this failing; he had grown attached to them from the time they had worked for him in his new house. Strange to say, his efforts were crowned with success; not only did they give up drink, but Sören became a most zealous temperance man and very religious; at last he knew the Bible by heart. It was literally true, he knew it by heart! He often told them how it was his greatest delight to make Aase hear him, and in some few small assemblies, he would repeat by heart whole chapters out of the Bible, while his hearers sat and followed attentively. The minister put his name down to get him into a Bible school, and he had no higher wish than to belong to it, but he expected Aase to be taken in too. As they did not agree to this, he gave up the Bible class and became unsteady again in everything.

He then became acquainted with that Jack of all trades, Kristen Larssen, who had just settled in the town. Kristen Larssen had heard about Sören Pedersen's powers of learning by heart, and tried to find out the mechanism of it. But there was none; the

whole thing was a gift of God's mercy; all things were possible for God.

That is in the book of Matthew, answered Kristen Larssen; but in the book of Judges it is written that the Lord was with Judah, but Judah could not make the enemy flee from the valley, because they had chariots of iron.

The worthy Sören Pedersen was much shocked that the God of the Jews had not gained the victory over the chariots of iron.

In the same book of Moses, continued Kristen Larssen, it is written, "Thou shalt not kill," but it is written too that the Lord constantly gave orders to kill. So there are contradictions.

This was altogether new to Sören Pedersen, and yet he knew his Bible by heart. He was anxious to know the rights of it, and at every religious meeting he demanded explanations. At last he had no less than a hundred contradictory questions to inquire into; it was no longer possible to keep the peace. Half of them went into fits of laughter, the other half got angry. It ended by his being turned out of the meetings, both he and Aase. "I don't know," said Dr. Kent, "whether I may tell you how your brother-in-law, with his own hands, turned out Sören Pedersen and his wife Aase--out of the meeting-house! They had sat themselves down there before anyone else, and they would not move. Your brother-in-law is very strong, but Sören Pedersen held on, until it struck the minister that he would take Aase first, and then they both pulled away at her as if she were a stick of firewood."

Kallem and Ragni roared with laughter at this.

"I myself have witnessed one of the encounters," said Dr. Kent. "The minister was holding an examination at the school; I am one of the school committee. Sören Pedersen and his wife, Aase, were present, and everyone suspected there would be mischief. 'God cannot lie,' said the minister. Then Sören Pedersen rose up and said: 'It is written, that the Lord gave unto the prophets a spirit of lying.' Again Sören Pedersen had to depart."

The scenery through which they were driving, as they listened to all these amusing anecdotes, was an elevated, sunny plain divided by large and small ridges of woodland--or contrariwise, a wood divided by cultivated fields. The farms were all well built, the fields fertile, the road varied, first through woods, across fields, hills, and undulating over brooks and streams. There were heaps of stones in the most unexpected places, and paths and roads in all directions. Anyone coming from the prairies of America and the regularity of Central Europe, would be put in good spirits by all this variety. The same dazzling sunshine as yesterday, the same strong scent from meadow and wood--and such a display of flowers, such singing of birds; hark, that was the cuckoo!

It was not long till midsummer's day, and the vegetation was thereafter; Ragni was enchanted with the luxuriance of it all. Botany was her favourite branch of study, and the contrast between the flora she had studied, and that of the country here, interested her greatly. She asked if there were many places in Norway where barberry and columbine grew wild? Dr. Kent thought that they must have been brought into the country a long time ago; probably by the monks from the cloister down yonder.

As they passed again from the meadow into a narrow strip of wood, principally fir-trees, she saw the linnæa for the third time; she could not sit still in the carriage any longer; they all got out.

It had just begun to open its bell-shaped pink flowers; its spicy fragrance filled the wood; Ragni at once began her little whisperings to it; if only she were allowed to be alone now--for six years they had not seen each other, or, indeed, as it was spring when she started, it was six years and a half. She gathered and lifted up some of them, and her eye fell on a "pyrola uniflora" bending low in melancholy solitude; Kallem had just found the same; she asked him what it was called in Norwegian? He asked Kent if it was not St. Olaf's candlestick--he asked as an apothecary, and

received an answer from a herbarium.

Ragni went further and further away from them both. The scent of the flower as she gathered it seemed to attract her still further in; it was sent to entice her on. So she went further, but kept a little behind--away from the others. She heard them talking; one hears so distinctly in the wood; she heard too a pair of startled birds. But here at hand was nothing but the rustling of her own footsteps through the grass and moss. She found one single wood-sorrel in flower, a last loiterer. It looked so out of sorts midst all its clover-like leaves; did it know its companions had left it?

The flowers all told her to go on; indeed, both the linnæa, and the holy candlestick, and the wood-sorrel drew her on; the latter had stood so long waiting on purpose for that. And there was Ragni--in a large family gathering of star-flowers; they were all waiting to see her; no one else had trodden that way this year. Ragni knelt down among them and told them how she had come from so very far away, she told it all in flower-fashion, without words; speech was not necessary between them. How she had opened one door after the other to find her way back to Norway; each time she had opened one, there had been another beyond ... until at last she was with them all. As soon as she saw the linnæa she knew that she had reached the end. This was the innermost of all. All great dangers from outside, direct from the sea, all that strength and cruelty, variable and busy, all this splendour and alarm, all impels us further and further in; right in here we must come to understand that everything does not fall in a thousand pieces. It is they who are in there who can control all.

"We have been waiting for you too. Here we keep the innermost secret."

"Oh, tell it to me!"

"Be kind to others."

"Indeed, I think that is the only thing I have a talent for. But if the others will not----"

"Let the others be as they will; but be you kind."

Then she understood, because she had gone so deep in. She understood now what had the greatest strength. The star-flowers.

"Ragni," shouted Kallem, in the distance, the wood resounded with his clear voice. "Yes!" Some of the family must go with her, she gathered them and took them up.

Then she hastened back again nearer to the road. On the edge of the wood stood an "actea"--it seemed to stand there just to show the way in, if she had got out of the carriage there. Now it wished to join the party. And just by the road, well hidden under the bank, was a whole party of lilies of the valley; where could her eyes have been? They knew well enough where she came from, for they, too, had been posted as sentinels to show the way in. They saw and understood one another directly; but that is always the way amongst those of the same family. Some of them must go with her too.

"Ragni!" shouted Kallem.

"Yes, yes!" and she came out on to the road and saw how far behind she was.

The two men were standing by the carriage, talking; they were on the top of the bank, and Kallem's tall figure and the other's little slight one stood out clearly defined. Both of them had their hands full. As she hurried toward them she could hear Kallem discoursing; it was on a branch of black alder which he swung as he stood there; he repeated in German, a German botanist's delight over this stately poison-bearer which he had come across in Norway. Dr. Kent presented her with a "polygula amara;" he knew that the little blue flower would be new to her coming from America. She thanked him warmly. They got into the carriage and began at once arranging their treasures, and begged Ragni to choose what she liked; they had gone through a small bog; Kent had the flower of a bog-fir fastened in his coat, and they had both gathered everything, down to the very buttercup, "that wild beast," said Ragni; she wouldn't have it; it was so "muddy" too.

"You are æsthetic in everything," said Kallem. She shot a glance at him, sweet as the

scent of her flowers.

"Do you notice that we are quite alone on the road?" remarked Dr. Kent; he told them that everyone was at church, as old Pastor Meek was to preach a farewell sermon on this his fifty years jubilee day. When he was twenty years old he had become curate to his own father--that was in those times--and he had inherited the living. He was now seventy years old, and was going to start on a journey abroad with his grand-daughter. He must be a strong man? Yes, and led a healthy life; always on the move, always busy. He was the go-between here. Go-between? Yes, each district must have one to intercede for science and for practical matters. Much of the prosperity of this district proceeds from him and has been passed on to others. Then he is popular? The most popular man of the neighbourhood. How is he "in the pulpit?" "Well, he has stood there now fifty years and related anecdotes. At first this was made fun of, and there were some who thought it profanation; now there are several who have followed his example."

"What sort of anecdotes are they?"

The last one that Dr. Kent had heard was about a woman who had been thirty years in prison in St. Louis, in America, and who, although she was seventy years old, was the worst of all the prisoners. Once the prisoners had to be moved to another prison which was under the management of a woman who was a Quaker. The old woman refused to be moved; she resisted with all her strength, and at last they had to tie her in a chair and carry her away. As they arrived with her, the woman who had the management of the prison stood in the doorway and received the furious old creature. "Unloose her!" she said. "But is it safe?" "Unloose her!" And they did so. As soon as the old woman was unbound, her new superintendent bent down over her, put her arm round her neck, and gave her a kiss of welcome as from one sister to another. Then the old woman fell on her knees and asked: "Do you really believe that there is some good in me?" From that time she invariably was quite obedient.

Here Kent and Kallem left the carriage; they had to turn up to a peasant's house a little way back from the road. There was a black dog lying in front of the gallery; he looked at the carriage and barked; but only once or twice, then he went down a few steps toward them, sniffed at them all round, and then went back and lay down.

There was no one else to be seen. The driver turned the horses and drove to one side. The two doctors went in to the patient, and Ragni walked up and down the yard. Through the window she could see an old man in bed and his old wife sitting beside him; she sang to him with trembling voice, and did not stop even when the door was opened behind her.

Ragni looked about her in the yard; then went and sat down on the store-house steps.

Nothing has such a quieting influence on one as a peasant's farm at rest. Not even the wood, for there is always a rustle or sound of something, and one must be on the look-out both sitting or lying down; nor yet the sea when it is quiet, for it never can be perfectly at rest; nor the meadow, for that swarms with life and we can see it too around us. But a peasant's farm which is not at work--the hens going about scratching and picking up food, make you feel comfortable, the dog lying down, and the cat that creeps stealthily a few paces, stops, then creeps on again, and the ploughs leaning up against the harrows, the grinding-stones standing dry, the carts with shafts down, the dinner-bell silent; everything that has been at work rests like you, and that which still moves about only adds to the general peace. Should you see a pig in the distance rooting up the ground, it is entirely occupied with that; or a horse champing and whisking away flies, that is its pleasure; should the little birds come and chirp their greeting to you, it increases the light-heartedness which is the foundation of all peace.

Suddenly, in the midst of this peaceful rest, the fright from that meeting with Josephine came over her. Was there nothing in her conscience that could accuse her? No, a thousand times, no! Not even her sister's children? No, for she could not even

have lived for them under such circumstances. What then? What had she done? She had loved him. And why should she not do so?

The quiet was over; she went up above the house and found there two kinds of "orobus" not very far apart, first of all the bird-pea out on the meadow, and then one other in a cup with petals; she could not remember the name of the latter. As she went down the path again she found a splendid cock's-comb and a third kind of violet; the others had already given her two kinds. What flowers there were! Look there! The loveliest veronica; ah, the head fell; but there is another, that will keep. Afterwards she heard that the fragile flower is called here "man's faith."

Again she went in to the farm-yard; through the window of the bed-room she saw Kallem with his ear pressed to the old man's chest. Dr. Kent soon came out and the wife with him; he screamed at her, but she heard almost nothing. Kallem looked so tall standing there in the door, now he came to join her. How she loved him.

They were sitting together in the evening in the doctor's work-room; it was now all arranged as it was to be, with the exception of the books. Sören Pedersen, followed by his wife Aase, came in from the passage through the dining-room; he looked cunning, she looked alarmed; they announced that the minister and his wife were just coming in at the gate!

Kallem saw that Ragni turned pale. As the others were present, however, he said nothing but: "Come along!" went into the drawing-room, and from thence out in the passage to receive them.

The meeting was a stiff one. The minister begged they would excuse their coming so late, but it was the most convenient time for him, he had just come from evening service. They only came in to ask if Kallem and his wife would go home with them to supper? On Sundays a clergyman is seldom his own master before the evening.

His voice had still a little of the solemnity of a sermon in it, and there was a reflection of church in both countenance and manner. Josephine stood and looked

about her, in which her husband speedily followed her example.

He thought it all very snug and cosy, and the piano was a "splendid piece of furniture." As they were looking at it, Josephine opened her lips for the first time, and turning to Ragni, said quickly: "I hear you play so beautifully!"

"Oh----"

"Won't you play something for us?" The minister added: "Please do!"

Ragni looked at her husband--as one who is drowning looks for help. "Ragni requires to be in the proper mood to be able to play," said he.

"Very likely she is tired," said the minister, excusing her; they sat down, the minister and Kallem opposite each other, Josephine on one side; Ragni remained standing.

"Of course you must both of you be tired," continued the minister; "you have been travelling now for so long, and then arranging the house here; I heard from Dr. Kent that you had very nearly finished?"

Yes, so they were; but they had had capital help from Sören Pedersen and his wife Aase. Ragni was afraid that those two were still in the dining-room, and hurried in to see; but they were gone, and were not in the doctor's room either.

The minister's face had assumed quite a fatherly expression. "We have been obliged to employ Sören Pedersen and his wife because the people we otherwise employ were not at liberty. But one ought not to give work to that kind of people."

"Indeed?"

"Oh, they are good workers; but they drink up everything they earn, and then stay away from their work for days; it was the same here too. They scandalize the whole congregation."

"Dear me, that's a pity."

In passing Kallem, Ragni stroked his head with her hand; she had to fetch something off the piano. The minister was nothing abashed by the doctor's flighty tone.

"We have striven to do what we could for them both--yes, for she drinks just as much as he does. You would be astonished if you heard how kind everyone has been to them. But all in vain, and worse than in vain. But I will not go further into that story." He looked at his wife, who sat there in her tight-fitting dress, stiff and impenetrable, a piece of perfection from top to toe. Her eyes so well trained that they saw everything without appearing to see. She would have liked Kallem to have come and spoken to her. Ragni stood farther back, unseen by the others, but directly opposite him.

"It is provoking," he said, "that the former doctor built his house so close to the hospital. It is not pleasant to have strangers so near one."

"Yes, but the old man built it for his brother-in-law. And now he is dead too."

"So I hear; if I could afford to sink more money in houses, I would buy this, although I should have no use for it."

Josephine turned half round, doubtless to see if Ragni still stood there. "I don't think it is for sale," said she; "I know the heirs." Then there was a pause for a little while.

The minister started a new subject; that same morning he had been reading in the Morgenblad about the general state of insecurity all over America. He spoke like one who knew all about it, and turned continually to his wife; if he did look at the others--for instance at Ragni, who had just come back from America--it was merely a passing glance; he invariably returned to his wife.

Pastor Tuft was a stately, good-looking man, especially as a certain degree of stoutness had filled in his bony face; he had a pleasant voice, and his Melancthon eyes sparkled and glistened at all that was said. His speech and manners were, if anything, persuasive; but one felt his power under cover of all his mildness.

His wife quite unexpectedly made an upward movement with her head. "Of course it must be time to be going now," said he, as he rose from his seat; "I am quite forgetting myself. Well--will you go with us?"

Josephine got up too, so did Kallem. But he, too, had a wife who could give glances, warning and imploring.

"Thanks, but we are both tired, we will put it off till another time."

And so they accompanied the others to the door. Kallem then went to the window and looked out after them as they walked away, both so tall and strong-looking. Soon they had left the church behind them; everyone who met them greeted them most respectfully. He stood on there even after they were out of sight. He walked up and down the room a few times, then he turned a somersault (made a wheel on his hands). "Go and fetch Sören Pedersen and his wife Aase to me!"--but he went himself. They were not to be found anywhere; Sigrid told him they had gone directly the minister and his wife came. "Hang it all, now you'll see they are making themselves tipsy! Just go down to them and invite them to come to supper with us. Say we are quite alone." Off went the girl; Kallem shouted out after her: "Insist upon their coming, whether they want to or not."

"Now listen to me, Mr. saddler!" said the doctor, when they both appeared in the parlor again, the wife behind the husband; "listen to me. The minister says that you drink, Pedersen, both you and your wife, and that he cannot get you to give it up?"

"The minister speaks the truth."

"But it is a dreadful disease, Pedersen."

"Oh, yes--in the long run."

"Will you leave it to me to cure you?"

"Oh, most willingly, doctor! but seriously, now; will it take a long time?"

"Two minutes."

"Two minutes?" He smiled; but before the smile had vanished, Kallem was upon him with his eyes, which had a strange and startling expression. The saddler changed colour, he retreated a few steps. The doctor followed and told him to sit

down. He did it without hesitation. "Look at me!" Aase was fit to faint. "Sit down, you too!" said the doctor over his shoulder to her, and she collapsed into a chair. Yesterday already the doctor had seen what kind of people he had to do with; it did not take two minutes, before Sören Pedersen was completely mesmerized and his wife Aase too, though she had only been looking on. The doctor commanded them to open their eyes again; they both did so at once. "Now listen here, Sören Pedersen! You just leave off drinking brandy or spirits in any shape or form whatever; no more wine either, nor strong beer--not for one whole month. Do you hear? When that month is past--it is now half-past six--you come here to me on the stroke of the hour. And you too, Aase. Every time he wants to drink, you must cry out. And afterwards you can sing, both of you."

"But we can't sing."

"You will sing all the same."

IV.

Josephine left the town, she took her boy with her to the west-country, to have some sea-bathing; the minister was soon to follow them, he had not had a holiday since he had taken holy orders. He had come here as curate, directly after his examination, and had so completely gained the good-will of his congregation, that when, two years ago, the town and country parishes were separated, the congregation voted unanimously for him, and he got the living. He had worked very hard for about six years; he much required a little rest. Josephine went up to her brother's house one day when he was not at home, she announced that she was about to travel, said good-bye, and left a greeting for her brother.

Ragni understood at once that this journey had simply been arranged so as to escape the necessity of introducing her into society; they would not help to smooth her path. She did not mention it to the unsuspicious Kallem. He soon forgot the whole affair, for he got such an amount of work to do. As Kent wished to go abroad, Kallem

would have to take both their practices, in consideration of his having attended to the hospital before Kallem's arrival. The third doctor who belonged to the place was a young military surgeon, he was now at the manœuvres. His name was Arentz; he was possessed of a remarkably broad, powerful chest. Kallem recognized, by the accuracy of his knowledge, the very words of the books he had studied from; at first he had great difficulty in not calling him Niemeyer, but he admired his upright and honorable character. When Kallem found that this life passed on highways and streets was becoming quite unbearable to him, he thought of asking Arentz to help him; if he wished to become an independent man, he must arrange things very differently.

Ragni saw him gulp his food down in the middle of the day and return home in the evening. Sometimes he sat on the veranda with her for a while, or took a turn arm in arm in the garden, or helped her if there was anything she was busy with; but seldom--as he had to go in to his books. A great change took place, however, when his colleague returned; his only thought was that of regaining lost time, so now he was a fixture in the laboratory or office. Ragni very soon installed herself in this sanctum; she got her own chair, her own book-shelf; in fact, the office became the sitting-room.

They each read their own book by the hour, scarcely exchanging ten words. He had got into a long, self-engrossing study, and had no idea what he looked like when he, at intervals during his reading, stretched full length on the sofa, silently gazing at her; or, as was generally the case, stood looking out of the windows. If he did move away a few steps, it would only be to return again at once to his old place at the window. He declared that there was no place where he could think with so much ease as there; this was an inheritance from his father.

He was much attached to his home, and seldom returned to it without a grateful feeling, and went about as happy and light-hearted as a bird. After dinner he was

very fond of listening to music; but did not always as much as remark what Ragni was playing.

But she? Each day she bound herself faster and faster to the animate and inanimate things of her home. She again called him her "white pasha," her piano "a fairy tale." "Now for a fairy tale!" she said, when she felt inclined to play, and soon taught him to do the same. She called their bed-room, "amongst the stars." The pigeons which were given her at Whitsuntide, she called "her Whitsuntide-lilies;" Sigrid she called "the seven-armed woman." When she and Kallem were-sitting reading in the office, she felt as if they were out sailing, each in their own boat, each to their own country. "Shall we go in and have a sail?" was what she called it.

He had discovered by her letters from America how fond she was of using figurative language: "We are each working slowly toward each other at opposite ends of a tunnel through the world," she wrote in one of her letters, and always kept returning to the subject of the tunnel; at last "they had reached so near to one another that she could hear him speak!" About the steamers, "that swim above," passing each other with their letters, she wrote that "the desire of the one attracted the other after it."

One evening that they were sitting on the veranda (it was raining, but they were protected by the projecting roof), she said: "A house like this should have a head."

"A head?"

"Yes, a head between the wings as every worthy hen has."

"Oh, that's what you mean, is it?"

"I always feel as if I were under a pair of wings, being hatched."

"Tell me how it is that you did not use biblical figures of speech in your youth?"

"Because I had a father who taught me what the origin of everything was from my tenth year; plants, animals, and people all belong to one family--that was a doctrine that I loved! After that I got a step-father who was a clergyman, and insisted that the

earth and human beings had been created perfect from the beginning, and that everything was made for the use of man; but I did not believe it. My own father was a quiet, delicate man, I loved him dearly; I was afraid of my step-father, he was such a strong, violent man."

Kallem asked her to give him a description of her childhood and education, but she answered decidedly, no.

Kristen Larssen had got work to do at the doctor's, he had arranged his laboratory and put up the ventilators, etc. Kallem had never had anything to do with a more silent, suspicious man; but neither with a more clever one. He came one Sunday morning in the beginning of August, arrayed in his best clothes, a long-tailed brown cloth coat, with extraordinarily tight sleeves, an old rusty waistcoat, much too short, and a pair of gray trousers made of the so-called English leather. He went about bare-headed, as a rule; but on grand occasions he carried a hat in his hand; he could not bear anything on his head, unless the weather were fearfully cold. There he stood in the office, tall, thin, with closely-cropped hair, well-scrubbed face with black stubby beard. His whole appearance was lightened up by a white collar spread over a red-striped scarf. The doctor asked him to sit down, and inquired what was the matter with him. His answer was--first an inquiring glance, and then that he had not complained of his health.

Kallem remarked by the answer he had just given him, that it was not easy to tell him what he wanted; but he thought to himself: Now, my friend, you may be content.

At last he said that he knew that "the doctor's wife" had been five or six years in America; and that perhaps she might have some English books to lend him. As he had taught himself a little English, perhaps she would tell him how to proceed further.

Was he thinking of emigrating? Oh, that would not be freedom; "to go and be a

slave for the Norwegians ... over there too; no, I don't feel drawn toward that."

"How old are you?"

"About forty, or rather more."

He looked over fifty.

"I daresay my wife would with pleasure teach you English, Larssen, maybe in the evenings."

No, he would not hear of that on any account. Kallem, however, explained to him that pronunciation must be learned by ear; Ragni happened to come in at that moment, and Kallem told her that if Kristen Larssen knew English, it would be like giving him a pair of wings. She blushed, for it was not the first time that her husband had given her some tiresome work to do; of course, he thought she had not sufficient occupation. She, however, would have preferred not to agree. But as she stood looking at Kristen Larssen, she remembered that her husband had never met a cleverer man; she began to feel a certain amount of compassion for him. He was studying an English book at that moment, and could barely understand what it was about. She not only proposed to help him, but tried to persuade him to accept her proffered help. On that very same afternoon, about five o'clock, they began; they sat spelling through a very easy book. When Kallem came home he found them with their heads close together, poring over the same book, the one black and rugged, the other small and well-formed with reddish hair; the one a stiff, grubby face with furrows and wrinkles; the other possessed warm bright eyes and dazzling colouring, and was full of spirit. She held her handkerchief to her mouth, it was evidently a struggle for her to sit beside him at all. Kallem then remembered that he himself had remarked that Kristen Larssen's breath was not of the sweetest. Kallem at once arranged that they were each to have their own book and sit at opposite sides of the table. As soon as ever she could, she escaped. To make up for this Kallem invited Larssen to spend the evening with them, and tried to thaw him up a little; but no, he

was just as stiff and wary when he left as when he came. Kallem's thoughts were much taken up by him. Who in all the world could he be, and how had he managed to become like this?

One day Kallem had occasion to go to his house. There he found a thin, stiff-looking woman who was Kristen Larssen's wife, her head wrapped in a black shawl; if the husband had too little covering on his head, she certainly had too much. No children. No fire on the hearth; she said she cooked the food for many days at a time. She went about knitting with a shrewd and suspicious air. Kallem began to think they had agreed to live as cheaply as possible, so as to scrape as much money together as they could for the journey they wished to take. As he wanted an excuse for this visit, he had taken a revolver with him that would not go off; it was in its case, so he had taken case and all with him, but only remarked now that the ammunition for the revolver was in it too. He showed it to her.

"Oh, there are many of that kind here," she answered, and took it up without the slightest fear. "What a charming weapon," she said, and laid it down, locked it, and put the case on a shelf over her husband's work-table. Both the shelf and the table were covered with things waiting to be mended.

"He has too much work out just now," said she, "such trifles must wait."

Work-room, kitchen, and bed-room were all comprised in this one apartment. A bell hung on the wall, a table, a bed, a long bench, and three wooden chairs; otherwise the room was completely bare--then a nasty strong smell.

He went home past Sören Pedersen, the saddler's shop. Kallem had helped him to begin this shop, he was getting on well. There stood Kristen Larssen, with a glass in one hand, a bottle in the other, and Sören Pedersen and his wife were screaming or singing in front of the glass and bottle; it sounded like the long melancholy howling of a dog. Kristen Larssen laughed with a laugh that came from the very essence of his being. There was an unctuous satisfaction in this outburst, the exposure of a

malicious heart's innermost feelings, an explorer's hallelujah of wildest delight. Was it that he took an interest in these two people? Who knows? Did he repeat this every day?

Ragni soon had cause again to feel Kallem's talent of making work for everyone.

They were to meet old Pastor Meek and his granddaughter, Tilla Kraby, at a small party given by Dr. Kent; they had just returned from a trip abroad, but were to start again immediately. They had been made much of during this short, and in all probability last, visit to these parts of the country; this party was given for them, and Kallem and his wife, who otherwise did not go out much, went to it solely to have a look at them. The guests of the evening were very late in coming, but in the meantime a very stout lady, barely thirty years of age, was introduced to Ragni; she was bright and good-looking. She startled Ragni by saying: "I don't know whether it will be a disagreeable piece of news to you to hear that I am Sören Kule's sister." As she remarked how very uncomfortable Ragni looked, she quickly took her aside: "Pray do not think otherwise than that I should have acted exactly as you did," she whispered. "And particularly if I had met a man like your husband"--she pressed Ragni's arm. She was clever and free and easy, and had little idea that she was torturing the delicate feelings of the being whose arm she held. The fact that her face and figure had a resemblance to the "whale tribe" was enough; Ragni recognized everything, even the peculiarity of the "swimmers;" she could not help thinking of pork. At last old Pastor Meek and his grand-daughter appeared; their host and his sister--Dr. Kent was not married--went to receive them with almost all the rest of the company after them. One could distinguish amongst the "How do you do's" and "Welcomes" of the foremost, remarks from those who were behind. "How good-looking he is!" "What a traveller Tilla is!" In the meanwhile, Kallem and Ragni stood by and wondered who it was they were like; they seemed to recognize their faces.

Pastor Meek was a man of medium height, broad-shouldered, but rather stout. He carried his head high, it was broad and glistening, encircled by thick white hair. "Now I know!" whispered Ragni, "I am sure they are related to that young man we met the first day we were here. Of course you remember him, he was so good-looking."

"Yes, of course, that's it! The same arched face. They might perfectly belong to the Bourbons."

The old man thanked the company for their welcome in a low voice, but he spoke slowly. His eyes were not cheerful, on the contrary, they were wistful and resigned. He did not give one the impression of being a determined man, but of being kind-hearted and thoughtful. When any of the officials of high standing spoke to him, he put on a stiff, ceremonious manner, quite in the old style.

"The new doctor" was introduced, and Fru Lilli Bing said to Ragni, as if she knew all about it: "Oh, how you two must suit each other! May I introduce you Fru Kallem, Fröken Kraby?" They bowed to one another rather shyly, but began to talk of the young man whom Fröken Kraby was like; he was her nephew and was very musical. This led to their speaking of music, and they never left one another's side for the rest of the evening.

Ragni had seldom--one may say never--with the exception of Kallem, found anyone who had so entirely taken up her thoughts. This quiet, and yet at the same time bright, blondine was so charming, and all she said was the expression of her own thoughts. Alas! she had to leave the town in a few days forever! That this was the first, and perhaps the last, time they were ever to meet, drew them with a kind of melancholy sweetness to each other. Ragni agreed on this account to play when her host, later in the evening, in his chaffing way, asked her to do so; she wished her new friend to learn to know her as well as possible.

"Do stand so that I may see a face I know," she whispered, and then began Solveig's

song from "Per Gynt." They had probably expected a showy piece, not such a simple melody; but when the piano had finished "singing," they were all so charmed that the town magistrate, who was general spokesman on such occasions, begged her to repeat it; which she readily did. Then followed the Wizard's March, so unutterably weird; directly after that Selmer's "Child's Frolics," such a delicate, charming contrast; she played it with the same clear understanding and feeling of the smallest nuances; then came a quiet, old-fashioned song by Sinding, each note like a separate word; then a bright, lively song by Svendsen; and finished up with a festival march by Selmer. She was not at all nervous to-day, her eyes flashed out volumes to Tilla, and from her to many others, volumes of all sorts of enchanted tales. The company was much entertained; the town magistrate marched about like a braying trumpet. Old Meek came up to her with old-fashioned gallantry; Tilla whispered to her: "Grandfather is so musical."

An hour later, old Pastor Meek went away; he never stayed longer than that at a party; his grand-daughter left with him, and Kallem and Ragni joined them.

The evening was mild, considering that it was the end of August, when there were always such sudden changes after sunset; still it was not so mild but what they were obliged to have on both cloaks and overcoats. There were people out walking everywhere. When they came to the Kallem's house, Ragni, who otherwise was so very retiring and shy, asked if they would not go in with them for a little while, and the old man answered politely that if there was the slightest hope of hearing some more music, the invitation was only too acceptable. So the lamps were lighted in the room, the piano opened, and an Italian barcarole went rowing away out through the open windows. Old Pastor Meek was delighted, and ventured to ask whether his grand-son, who was at the school here, might come and hear Fru Kallem play--of course only if it was quite convenient. Unfortunately, he was so taken up with his music that he had reached the age of nineteen without having passed his student's examination; but as there was no help for it, it was just as well he should hear good

music. Ragni replied that it would be a pleasure to her. Kallem asked if he should go to him and tell him he could come? The old man was most grateful to him, and would be still more so, if at the same time the doctor would examine him and see what was the matter with him; there was something wrong. Kallem said that he had noticed it too, and thought he would be able to find out what it was.

The old man sat down to the piano:

"Now you shall hear one of his songs," said he. And with fingers not so stiff as might have been expected, and with a low voice, as though one were fingering a church bell--particularly with a peculiar use of head-voice, he hummed:

When does the morning dawn? When golden rays are floating O'er the snow-covered heights Deep down in the dark rifts, Lifts The stem that turns to the light Till it feels like an angel with wings.

Then it is morning, Bright clear morning.

But in stormy weather, And when my heart is sad, There's no morn for me, None.

Surely the morning has dawned When the flowers have burst into bloom, And the birds having broken their fast, Are chirping a promise that The woods Shall have fresh green crowns as a gift, The brook have a sight of the sea.

Then it is morning, Bright, clear morning.

But in stormy weather, And when my heart is sad, There's no morn for me, None.

When does the morning dawn? When the strength that glows through Sorrow and storm, awakens The sun in thy soul, so thy bosom Warmly Embraces the world in this cause: To be truly good to each and all!

Then it is morning, Bright, clear morning.

The greatest strength thou knowest, And the most dangerous too-- Is it that thou would'st have? Yes.

Both voice and accompaniment were peculiar. Ragni exclaimed: "Oh, how it all

floats away!"

Kallem asked whose words they were--evidently a woman's? Tilla answered that it was taken from a newspaper; it was doubtless a translation. But when the others had left them, Ragni confided to Kallem that the "woman's words" was one of her translations! His cousin had got it into a Norwegian-American paper; and from that it had gone further still. This coincidence was sufficient to make Kallem go the very next day to Karl Meek--and three days later the latter, with his piano, books, and clothes, was established up in a large attic in Kallem's house, the one that looked out to the park. Kallem had overcome Ragni's strongest opposition.

V.

From that time there sat at their table a tall, long-haired individual, with legs twisted round those of the chair, with long red fingers always covered with chilblains, and so clammy that Ragni could not touch them. Nor could she bring herself to speak to him after what Kallem had told her about him; all the good and prepossessing qualities that she had seen in him at their first meeting had been effaced by what she had heard. He entered the room quickly, as if he had practised it, and then his coat or his sleeve caught in the door handle, or he did not shut the door the first time he tried, or his legs tripped him up, or he dragged a chair along with him, or knocked up against the servant who had just put down something on the table and was leaving the room. He never looked anyone in the face, his really fine eyes were sleepy and dull, his cheeks were ashen-gray; he studied the patterns on the plate, on the Chinese bread-basket which stood in front of him. He never uttered a word; if anyone spoke to him he was so startled that he answered "yes" or "no" as if he had hot cinders in his mouth. But he ate--according to Ragni's way of reckoning--like a carpenter's horse. And then, when he wiped his clammy hands on his trousers or up in his thick greasy hair, he was worse than Kristen Larssen.

This disgusting youth at her table every blessed day, and in the evenings Kristen

Larssen! To say nothing of all the old women Kallem brought in to her so that she might supply them with warm woollen things; children, too, who sometimes were to be clothed from top to toe--his tuberculous friends!

Not only did she feel repelled by the actual persons, but every door was left open; she had not a corner where she could be at liberty, nor could she call her time her own. There was no use talking to him about it, as long as that, which was her greatest horror, was his greatest pleasure. There was a little jealousy, too, mixed up with it: he did not think enough about her and her doings. He had quite put on one side that affair with his sister; the minister and his wife had long since returned to town, Josephine had paid them a flying visit one morning in their garden, with some flowers from old Kallem's grave; the brothers-in-law met in the street and by sick-beds; then, too, Kallem sometimes met his sister, who was very good to the poor; but she did not come to him, nor he to her; neither was there any party given in their honor at the minister's house, as everyone had expected; in fact, there were no more parties at all. Not for a moment did Ragni doubt the reason of this. Kallem did not understand how this unspoken doubt worried her; nor could he be made to see that in a way it shut her out from the town; and she would not worry him with it. He had the privilege of the busy man, to put everything on one side which did not seem "clear" to him. In his daily tubercular chase, the old women and children whom he brought in his train were more to him than "all religious disputes;" and unfortunately, more too than the comfort and sense of beauty which for her were an absolute necessity.

At the further end of the large hospital yard was a long provision store and woodhouse, etc. Kallem had a hall for gymnastics fitted up there, and he and the ashen-gray young man spent most of their evenings there after six o'clock. As long as this lasted, he came home very punctually, did his own exercises, then arranged a class and was himself the leader. It was a miserable affair to begin with, but with his accustomed energy he brought order and go into it. The timid youth had hardly

touched his piano since he had been there, he was afraid of Free Kallem. So Kallem went up to him every evening for half an hour with his book; he made Karl play whilst he sat there. In his capacity as doctor he had forced his way to his confidence; he looked after him with watchful friendliness, and soon the youth came into the room more at his ease, and did not sneak away so quickly. And at last she took courage--after earnest entreaties from Kallem--and said to the youth one Sunday morning: "No, don't go upstairs; come, let us try to play some duets together! We will take easy pieces," she added. He was in despair; but as good luck would have it, he nearly overturned the piano stool as he was going to sit down, and almost upset hers too in trying to save his own, and at that they both began to laugh; that helped them through the worst. She sat there fresh and slim, in a red silk dress, with lace at her neck and wrists, her long, white piano fingers well away from his long red ones; her intelligent face often turned toward him, a scent of mignonette from her dress, and the perfume of her hair ... he trembled with shyness. And how ugly he thought himself! And the smell of his hair! He struggled so to play, that he was soon tired and made stupid mistakes. "I am sure you are not inclined for it to-day," said she, and got up.

He went off like a beaten hound; he shrunk from all, he writhed, and for the ninth or ninetieth time made up his mind to run away. He never appeared at dinner-time, and was not to be found in all the house, so Kallem thought he would ask about it; she told him then what a miserable performance it had been; he had got tired after barely half an hour; a young man who could not stand more than that disgusted her. "Oh, you everlasting æsthetic!"--he went to look for the youth, and sacrificed his delightful Sunday afternoon to it, and came home with him toward evening. Then she whispered to him, when they were in the office, that she was going to be very good. Kristen Larssen came, and more patient than any beaten poodle, she sat herself down to give him an English lesson.

From the very first she had felt compassion for this peculiar man; but she froze to an

icicle in his society, and in the vicinity of his breath. Therefore, she herself thought that it was horribly cowardly of her to go on with it without a complaint; it was certainly not out of compassion. Punctual to the minute he appeared, in his long brown coat with the tight sleeves, and with a working-man's unbearable smell of stale perspiration from clothes and body. His breath reached right across the table; she felt it too, even if it did not really reach her. He pulled forward his chair, sat down, and opened his book, and when he had found his place, he sent his cold, horrible eyes across to her warm, startled, dove-like ones, startled beyond bounds. His long, black-smudged fingers, covered with black hair like his whole hand, took hold, the one hand of the book, the fingers of the other he used to point with; then he cleared his throat well, and finally began. Usually he asked about something from the last lesson; always intelligent, suspecting a mistake on her part, a want of perception or logic. He made her feel unsafe under the safest circumstances.

When he slowly, and with much deliberation, struggled on, word for word, and she presumed to interrupt him because he had made a mistake, he put down his finger still firmer to mark the place where he had been caught tripping, and looked up at her, vexed and suspicious. Then she in a most uncertain way reiterated her correction; but never could she succeed in making it clear enough to him; he had always to ask for further explanations. She repeated it a third time, and at last he was gracious enough to let it pass--to her account. Each time she interrupted him, she knew what would follow--and knew that wave upon wave of that bad breath would be wafted across to her.

What a piece of work it was for this man to come to her as sure as he always was; never repeating a mistake that once had been corrected; and what capacity he had, enabling him to ask all those extraordinary questions, which sometimes would have done honour to a philologist--all this she neither overlooked nor undervalued. But to her he was so truly fearful. He was too painfully like an old monkey she had seen sedately eating with a silver spoon. This picture hanging grinning over him was like

revenge.

There was one circumstance in her daily life which made it very pleasant, it was her work together with the servant; they became very good friends. Both of them got on so well together--Ragni found out what there was to do, and the other one did it. Ragni liked work and was quick about it, the servant was intelligent and anxious to learn; they took a pleasure in each other's society.

A fortnight after the unsuccessful attempt at duet-playing, she said to Karl Meek:

"What do you think about it? Shall we try once more?"

"No, thank you, it--it won't do!" answered he, horrified.

"Oh, yes, I have looked out a duet which you will be able to manage." She took it out, he stood at a distance of two ells and looked at it--grew very red, and passed his hands through his hair.

"Do you know it?" He never answered; it was a piece of his own, he called it the "Mountain Brook," and he had often played it for Kallem upstairs; now it had been arranged as a duet; in this way she wished to make up for the last time.

"Come, now!" In the same red silk dress, with the same lace falling over her long playing-fingers, there she sat, the same figure, the same wonderfully dreamy eyes looking at him, sometimes in a way that made him shiver. But now he was himself in new clothes, and his hair was cut and well arranged, as was his whole person. And the "mountain brook" came rushing from under her nimble fingers; if he were not always able to keep up with her, she waited to take him along. At last, if not quite perfect, it was at all events not so bad but what she graciously promised in the future to go on with it.

He bowed, and would have gone. "It is Sunday," said she, "you can't have anything to do?"

"No."

"Shall we go for a walk?"

"Yes, if you.... Oh, yes!"

Quick as an arrow he came down in overcoat and fur cap, and she appeared in her pretty cloak and the coquettish American hat with feathers.

"Let us go up the hill and meet the doctor."

They went off. She felt she would have to talk the whole time, so she began to describe the snow-storms on the American prairies, and what the consequences could be for both man and beast. He saw how little by little the colour came to her cheeks, and how her small feet could hurry along the road. There was no sun that October day, but it was not cold; the fields were dark and dull, and the foliage was just beginning to turn; but he saw nothing of all that, he was overcome by the thought that she had wished to walk with him, she, the most refined, the most musical woman he knew. For her sake he would so gladly roll in the dust, shoot himself with a pistol, or jump into the lake. This was no imaginary woman, it was Ragni Kallem in the red silk dress under the soft cloak, and the American hat with feathers--the one that all his companions admired so much. Those eyes gazed at him; and he dared not go down to their very depths. She walked and talked with him before everybody. Then he too began to talk, as they went from winter in America to winter in the forest districts. His father, Pastor Meek's son Otto, was a doctor and had married a farmer's daughter from a large farm in the forest district, and lived there like any other peasant. Together with him Karl had been across the river-bed, away up in the solitude of the wooded mountains; he had helped at the felling of timber, the netting of deer, and shooting; he talked of scenery and impressions of which she had not the slightest idea. He described the appearance of a black-cock, its courtship, habits, the flapping of its wings, and its cry so vividly, that she ever after called him the "black-cock."

They did not meet Kallem, and went back therefore by the same road. They played

their duet over again, and much better than at first; they wished to practise it well so as to play it some evening when Kallem was sitting in his office! To him Kallem was the greatest and highest he knew.

Little by little she gained influence over the "blackcock," and got accustomed to his oval face, his variable moods, one moment radiant and beaming, the next down in the depths, hasty and impetuous, then humbly submissive, with short spells of industry and long ones of "dolce far niente," very much got up, but at the same time very slovenly; she began to think him quite good-looking, and had no objection to take him by the hand. She helped him with his lessons; especially with his English. His learning was very scrappy, so Kallem proposed that he should leave school and study privately those things that he was so far behind in, and he wrote to Karl's father about it at once. After this Karl often sat in the large room with his books and exercises, played and read, and read and played--alone and together with her.

In the afternoons they were seen out taking long walks together. As soon as the snow lay firm on the ground--it had come the beginning of November--they would go and meet Kallem and drive home with him, each standing on one of the runners of his sledge. As soon as ever the bay was frozen they were out on the ice, the quickest and most agile of all. One sport alone had Kallem and he reserved for themselves, and that was to get Karl to walk on his hands. With the greatest solemnity the doctor would lift up his long legs and hold them up, while the other tried till he could try no longer. At first this went on only in the gymnasium, but soon they began in the room, in the passage, even on the stairs, just before dinner, just before supper too: "Up with your legs, lad!" How Ragni laughed every time he tumbled down again. At last she too became anxious that he should succeed; but he never could manage it; he was "too limp." Then it became a matter of honour for him; and the same for her too. She took a great interest in trying to make a "man" of him; his limp appearance, his tendency to dream and idle away his time, annoyed her greatly; she told him so. But he could not stand much, and soon became cross.

Then she punished him by being very reserved. It was of no use his being altogether crushed and that he made hundreds of advances, even that he cried; she allowed him to live in mortal terror of her complaining to Kallem; she helped him with his work, but without either a word or a look but what belonged to the subject; she refused to go out with him; she never saw him--until in Kallem's presence she could again talk as though nothing had happened. Kallem, of course, knew nothing of all these shadows cast over their mutual intercourse.

Kallem associated with no one, he had not time. He was obliged to diminish his practice, so that he took serious steps to come to an agreement with Dr. Arentz, the young military surgeon, that he should be his assistant. This was arranged by the end of November, and from that time he could take more part and interest in the lessons and mutual occupations which rendered them all the more firmly established.

Karl Meek's father travelled into town on purpose to thank them, and to invite them to accompany his son up to the forest district for Christmas. Otto Meek was taller and stouter than his old father; the face was in more grand style, more truly "Bourbon;" but it was melancholy, or rather gloomy. Kallem accepted the invitation, and at once made arrangements with his colleagues to enable him to get away. But as the time drew near Dr. Kent fell ill, and Ragni was obliged, however unwillingly, to start alone with Karl; Kallem would follow them. A fur cloak for driving was bought for her, fur boots, a foot-muff; a valuable fur cap, too, a present from Karl. She looked like a Greenlander when she had it on.

Kallem went to the station with them; Ragni had been crying a little--in honour of its being the first parting since they were married. As she sat in the train and Kallem stood outside, she was going to begin again; he had to get in and scold her. As soon as her tears were checked, he got down again and looked up at Karl, who sat there happy and healthy. "I say, dear old 'black-cock,' from this time I shall always say 'thou' to you and call you Karl, for you are a good fellow!" But Karl jumped right

down and threw himself on his neck.

So they departed.

Kallem read a great deal and thought it not altogether unpleasant to be at peace; latterly they had occupied his time very much. But already the third day, which was Christmas Eve, it felt lonely; he thought he would go and take them by surprise; Dr. Kent was better.

On the evening of Christmas Day he was just coming away from Kent and going up to the hospital, when he saw in the distance a small crowd at the gate. A horse and sledge were just driving away; the sledge was full of straw and bed-clothes; some sick person must have been driven in. He heard also children crying. Who had been hurt? It was Andersen, the mason--the same man who had greeted Kallem and his wife from up on the new house, the first day they came to the town. In the winter, mason Andersen went about and did pedlar business whilst his own trade was at a stand-still, and in crossing over a forest ridge he had lost his way, fallen and hurt himself, and had to lie there until, by the merest chance, he had been found. Kallem found his inconsolable wife with the deaconesses, and heard from her that her husband, who was an active man, had made extra haste as it was just before Christmas, and had wanted to take a short cut so as to reach home for Christmas; Andersen was always so "fond of his home." But his sight was bad, and he slipped on his Lapp-shoes and cut and broke his leg, and there he lay not able to move. That was how he kept Christmas. "We waited and waited," she said, "and the children too!"

Kallem went up to the patient, who was in bed in a warm room. The big man with the large brown beard floating over his shirt was altogether unrecognizable. The eyes were pressed together, the eyelids swollen, stiff. The mucous membrane of the eye was inflamed, the cornea was threatened, and as it was painful at the slightest ray of light, there was probably greater danger at hand. Swollen bluish-red patches

on the face; the fingers of both hands quite white and without feeling; the backs of the hands twice their usual size and covered with large blisters full of water. The right leg was broken at the upper end of the fibula, the fracture went up into the knee-joint; the wound was as large as a crown-piece, a splinter of bone sticking out like a finger. Compared with this, all other injury to the foot was of little consequence.

Andersen could hardly speak, but now and again groaned that his foot must not be cut off. Kallem answered repeatedly as he helped him, that the next morning's daylight would decide it. The room was at once half-darkened, compresses of boron water were laid on his eyes, with urgent instructions to change constantly; his face was rubbed in with oil and wrapped in a thin sheet of wadding, the same with the hands; the wound in the leg was syringed with carbolic water, and a small bleeding vein was bound up, the wound sprinkled with iodoform and wrapped round with wadding, and put in a wire bandage. If he should awake and feel weak, he was to have ether every second hour, and if in very great pain, then an injection of morphia.

After that he fell asleep; but each time he awoke he complained of unbearable pain--less from the fracture, but more particularly down the shin-bone to the back of the foot; he was in constant fear that his foot would be amputated.

At nine o'clock the next morning, Kallem thought him better in all respects. His mind was clearer, too, now, but was still much taken up about his foot--if only it might be spared. He wished to see his good friend the minister; the wife was there, and she went off at once to beg the minister to come to him a little before church began. Meanwhile his eyes were attended to; they were less swollen, but could not bear the light; atropin was used to them and the compresses changed for a light bandage. Kallem was on the lookout when Andersen's wife came back with the minister; he went to meet them. According to his opinion, Andersen's right leg would undoubtedly have to be exarticulated, that is, the leg taken off at the

knee-joint; but the patient was not to know that at present. The wife, who until now had taken the accident with strength of mind and calmness, broke down entirely, so Kallem dared not let her go into the room; the minister went in alone.

It made a deep impression on the latter to stand beside his sick friend in this darkened room, and by degrees distinguish the giant lying there without eyes, with an unrecognizable face, his hands in bags, and to hear him moaning. But soon he was bound to admire his strength and his confident faith. Andersen wished them to pray for him in church to-day; "they all know me," said he. The minister agreed to it, but on the spot he offered up a heartfelt prayer for him and for all who were dependent on him. The sick man was much cheered by this prayer; he whispered: "I have made a covenant with God about my foot," then lay quite quiet whilst the minister pronounced St. Paul's blessing over him. Within an hour from then Dr. Arentz came, and Andersen was carried into the operating-room. They told him that they intended to chloroform him so as thoroughly to examine his injuries; and as he was still suffering such intolerable pain, he agreed to it at once; "but my foot is not to be cut off."

A closer examination proved that the upper extremity of the fibula was splintered up crossways into the knee-joint; unfortunately, too, one of the larger veins lay pressed between the fractured extremities, so that its pouch was filled by a large thrombus, which stretched up a few inches of the thigh.

As a matter of course, the leg had to be amputated; it was done in a quarter of an hour.

All those who were to help in nursing him were strictly enjoined to let him believe that his leg had been spared. All excitement was to be avoided, so that there might be no possibility of his raising himself in bed and changing his position; if a thrombus were started, it would be all over with him. He was laid in a wire bandage from the hip-joint and down to the foot of the bed, the stump was wrapped in a

bandage of carbolic gauze and jute, and fastened at the outer side to a block.

When he was in bed again they roused him, but impressed upon him to keep perfectly quiet. They gave him wine, but in tablespoonfuls, so that he need not move; in the same way he had some bouillon (beef-tea) and the yolk of an egg; soon he fell asleep again.

As soon as Kallem had changed his coat, he went down to the deaconesses' room where the wife was waiting, and told her the whole case, together with the danger threatening if Andersen were in any way agitated. He grew quite fond of her broad, intelligent face with the eagle's nose; seldom had he come across a purer strength of character. "Should this end badly," said he, "you have still many friends."

"God lives," whispered she.

Between three and four o'clock Andersen woke up, took more spoonfuls of wine, beef-tea, eggs, milk; he assured them that he felt well enough, except that his shin-bone pained him; occasionally too he felt a pain in his heel. Toward evening his vital powers were much stronger, and he wished to see the minister again. Just as his wife was going to fetch him, he came of his own accord. Kallem had impressed on him that he was to pretend that the leg was still on.

It was evident at once that Andersen just lay there and thought of nothing else. "I think now I can say that God has heard my prayer," said he; "therefore must He be thanked in a fitting manner."

The minister was touched by this, and felt called upon to give hearty thanks that the leg had proved to be a pledge of God's mercy to the sick man, and had allied him still more closely with his Saviour. Andersen seemed to be considering the matter; at last he said: "Pray now that He will spare the leg afterwards too."

What could make him think of that?

"Oh, because I have so much pain in it."

But shortly before he thought his prayers had been heard?

"Yes; but it is a good thing to pray without ceasing."

The minister tried to refuse; but the patient at once became restless, and his wife whispered meekly that Andersen must be allowed his way in this. So the minister yielded. But he did it more on her responsibility than on his own, and it passed over. Kallem had just gone home when the minister came to him there, very pale, and told him what had taken place. "I will not do that over again," said he.

"I can assure you, you have done a good deed." The minister stood with his overcoat and hat on, his hand on the door-handle; Kallem's tone and words offended him. "Through truth alone can we draw near the God of truth. Good-bye!"

The doctor followed him out: "You believe, then, that if you now tell Andersen his leg has been cut off, that God can save him?"

"Yes," answered the minister, angrily, without turning round.

It was impossible for Kallem to leave now. He wrote a lengthily detailed letter to Ragni and promised to come as soon as he could.

The next morning he found everything in the most desirable order; but enforced the greatest quiet in his position in bed, and that he was not to talk so much. In the afternoon Andersen wished to take the sacrament, but the deaconess answered that he could not stand so much agitation. "I wish to renew my covenant with God," replied Andersen.

They could not do otherwise but listen to this; but they dared not consent without first asking the doctor, and he had been sent for in the morning to attend a confinement. The deaconess consulted with the porter, who had been there so long that he was all-powerful. Andersen repeated his wish to him too in the most decided way, and the porter thought it could not be avoided; he would take the responsibility on himself. Shortly after the minister and he were together in the porter's room to take the chill off the wine; the weather had changed and it was a bitterly cold

evening. They both went upstairs. Andersen was glad to hear who it was who came; "I knew it," said he.

The minister asked if there were anything special?

"Yes, there was."

The others left the room. Then Andersen said that once, when he was young, he had given a boy a rupture with the same foot that now was injured. It was surely not on that account that he was now punished?

"No."

"No, but for all that he had been thinking so much about it, and had a longing to take the sacrament."

There was nothing else the matter?

"No."

The minister begged him to collect his thoughts, now they would pray together. Andersen was silent while this went on. After the prayer the minister gave him absolution from sins, and said that now he would give him the bread and wine.

"Oh, wait a little! Now I have received absolution from my sins, now there is a clean page. Let us write down the leg on that, that it may be read in heaven. I feel so happy, yes, I am so truly happy!"

"The whole body is included in the covenant, dear Andersen."

"Yes, but this time the Lord is to promise my wife and children that my leg will get quite well. Come now!"

He stretched out his frost-bitten hands.

The perspiration broke out on the minister's face. "I cannot do this," whispered he, quite unconsciously.

Andersen's mouth quivered, his bandaged hands fumbled for something; he raised them to his eyes, but they were met by the bandage. "We cannot question the justice

of God," said the minister; "supposing now that what we wish for is impossible?"

Was there something in the minister's voice, or was it the actual opposition that made Andersen suspicious?

Without answering, he tore the bandage from his eyes, and he raised himself up, did it quickly, flung the bedclothes aside and fell back on his pillow, put his hand on his chest, crying out that he was suffocating, his breathing was alarming. A clot of blood (thrombus) had gone up into the lung.

The minister had put down what he was holding in his hands, and hastened to the door where the porter and the others were waiting outside; they ran for Doctor Arentz and Doctor Kent, but before either of them arrived Kallem had come back. The minister had left by then; Andersen died that same night.

VI.

The porter was the first who had to pay for it. He was dismissed that same day.

Then Kallem went down to Andersen's widow. "You are a very clever, capable woman. If you like you shall have the place as porter and steward at the hospital. Accept it and begin at once to-morrow to pack up and move in with the children, you will have less time to think about your sorrow. Have you a good servant-girl?"

"Yes."

"Take her with you. More will not be necessary. Everything else is ready, and the deaconesses will help you."

The upper deaconess got a sound rating; but nothing further. She was to atone for her mistake by doing all that lay in her power to help mother Andersen.

He made no effort to see the minister, nor the minister to see him. He heard from others that he had been ill, which he thought likely enough. A few days later Kallem met Josephine in the street; she pretended not to see him.

The effect produced by this incident is not easily described. The whole town was in

a tumult. There must be something peculiar about belief altogether, when belief in a lie could save a man from certain death.

Of course the porter and his large family came down upon the minister and his wife like a heavy beam. Josephine had to provide money for starting them in a bookseller's shop, much more money than she wished to part with.

From that time Kallem had a true and faithful enemy in that man.

Directly after all this Kallem travelled up to the wood district. He gave no notice of his coming; he came driving up from the station to the farm one moonlight evening just as the yard and a good part of the road were filled with sledges; some had people in them, some were empty; old and young, all were going on a sleighing expedition; they were to start from here and come back to the farm to dance.

No one noticed him coming from the station; they thought he belonged to the party. It was only when he stood in the passage where the people of the house and their guests were dressing that several of them saw he was a stranger; but they did not think much about that; many fur-clad figures were tramping out and in. Ragni had just got her fur on when she felt herself embraced from behind. She gave a scream and looked up. What delight that was! And Karl, who stood aside in a corner struggling to pull on his long boots--without a sound or word he pulled them off again, his fur too, flung his legs up in the air and away he went on his hands to greet Kallem; at last he had acquired the art! The father stood by with his thick hair and his melancholy face; he introduced Kallem to his wife, a pale, quiet creature; she spoke in the dialect of that district and had a weak voice--about all that Kallem remarked in her. He had now no time for anything but just to join them.

There was much neighing of horses, and shouting, and little screams, and laughter until "Ready!" was sung out down all the line and the first sledge with a lady in it and a fur-man standing behind dashed off; then sledge upon sledge, broad ones and narrow ones, sledges with one horse and sledges with two horses. All along the

snowy field in the moonlight there was a long waving line with blackish-gray dots on it wending toward the wood, while soon re-echoed through the trees the sound of bells, dogs, laughing and talking. Some began to sing, others joined in; but it was impossible to keep time, so they gave it up. Kallem sat in a broad sledge with his wife. She looked so sweet wrapped in all her furs that he several times tried to kiss her--a very difficult task. What a lot she had experienced! As he listened to her it became clear to him that it was only now she was enjoying her youth. He had never seen anyone so happy, had never known that she had such a longing for enjoyment in her. The same thing struck him later in the evening, as they danced, played games, chattered, played, ate; she was enjoying herself now for many past years. Whether it was a ponderous wood-owner who took her round her slim waist and carried her off so that she barely touched the floor with the tips of her toes, or whether she caught hold of one of the children and waltzed away with it, or of Karl, or some other youth from school or university whirled her round the reverse way like a top--there was always the same delighted face, the same zealous eagerness. The dancing and games went on in a corner room reaching right across the house; but many kept streaming out from there and into the other rooms, yes, even into the kitchen over in the other corner; the door into it was open. A few elderly gentleman tried to have a game of cards in a corner, but had to give it up; they were perpetually being called away to dance, they too. Old and young, all were equally happy.

At eleven o'clock the next day Ragni was still asleep, and when she came downstairs about noon, rather tired and confused and much astonished that Kallem had got up without her hearing him, she was informed that he had gone away! A telegram from Dr. Kent, who was ill again, made it impossible for him to remain longer. A few hasty lines, scribbled while he ate his breakfast, comforted her a little. He wrote that he would not wake her as she had been up so late the night before, still less would he have her with him; but never had he felt a greater pleasure than in seeing her so happy.

The first thing Kallem found when he got home was an invitation to a ball from the "club." And he decided to accept it. The invitation was in his sister's hand-writing (she was one of the patronesses) and it was to "Dr. and Mrs. Kallem." Dear me!

Should he telegraph for Ragni? He decided to let her stay where she was; she could not be better off.

Meanwhile he had to do with a very serious matter. His first visit the same evening was to a poor woman down in the town, Sissel Aune, a washerwoman and mother of a large family; she was in bed with inflammation of the lungs. It was particularly on her account that Kent had telegraphed. The seventh day had passed without any crisis, and when this night was half through, the ninth day would be over too. Would she survive it? Both upper and lower tips of the lung were affected. The heart was weak, the pulse very feeble, and there were other bad symptoms. Should he try to brace up the heart with atropin for the last struggle? He had never tried that remedy in a similar case, but it seemed reasonable enough. Wherever he went and whatever he did, this question haunted him. The five children were over with Sören Pedersen and his wife Aase; those two were capital in such emergencies.

The second time he went there he stayed; it was a wrestling match with death.

It was a small but clean room with three beds. A miserable geranium in the window and a portrait of King Charles XV. on horseback, in frame and glass, hanging on the wall, a few photographs fastened up with pins, and beside them a violin with three strings, the fourth hanging down loose. The poor creature who lay there had once been a good-looking woman, should she recover she would still be hard-working and active. But now she was wasted away to skin and bone, her worn-out hard-working hands resting on the ragged sheet. But the man who sat beside her was not strong like she was; no, he was indeed a poor weak thing! A good-natured face, so far in keeping with the violin on the wall that perhaps a string had cracked in himself before the one now hanging there had given way. Tired and worn out by

night-watching, he sat there quite by himself, not because the neighbours were chary with their help, but because the one who had last sat there was resting now until the last struggle should begin. It had touched Kallem to see that the neighbours kept watch on each side of the house, wishing to prevent Christmas merry-makers from passing that way; they relieved guard the whole night through. He heard this from the woman who came again about eleven o'clock to help. There was not much to be done except for the doctor, and he did not know whether he dare do anything.

After the first injection of one-third of a milligramme the pulse was raised. Kallem felt some hope, but dare not send it on to the imploring eyes of the husband; it might deceive him. The pulse kept steady for a couple of hours, then it fell; a fresh dose and it rose again. He sat there watching her in great anxiety. He had a book with him and tried to hold it under the lamp, now and again he took in a little of it, but it was speedily forgotten. Not a word was spoken, but there were groans and sighs. The last shouts outside in the distance, the last sound of bells died away, the last door had long since been shut, the night was gray and still. Five children, the eldest not more than ten years old, were about to lose their provider, and the man who sat there, sometimes tapping his knees, then stroking them, or resting his elbows on them and clasping his hands together, and staring first at her, then at the doctor, alas, he too would lose his provider.

Each time the pulse grew weaker a fresh dose was administered, and it invariably strengthened the pulse so that it certainly seemed as though he were doing the right thing. But the crisis would not end; it was past midnight, and according to what they said the ninth day was over, and still the same wearing struggle was going on. He got up from his seat in hope and fear, and sat down again, took his book, held it up, laid it down--and went to take her temperature. Her strength was fast ebbing away; the husband saw it in his face and he struggled to keep back his tears; the doctor warned him to be quiet. One more trial, and soon after she fell asleep. But was that really sleep? He listened. The others looked at him and he at them. He left the

bedside for a little while to return to it with fresh powers of judging; it was genuine, quiet sleep! He turned round to the husband, who read it in his face and a reflection of the light of life flitted over from the doctor's to his face. He got up, again his feelings overcame him--it must break out now. "Go to bed!" whispered the doctor. The man flung himself down on one of the beds with his face buried in the pillow--then he gave way completely.

Whispered injunctions to the woman who sat by the stove and who now got up. Kallem promised to be there again later on in the morning; she helped him on with his overcoat, he quietly opened the door for himself and shut it again as quietly. The dull, gray weather had turned to a heavy fall of snow. Not a single light was to be seen in any window, with the exception of that one watching over the newly-kindled spark of life. As Kallem went past the saddler's shop he could not resist knocking at the door; but they were sound asleep in there. He knocked again, for he felt sure that they had given up both their bed and the warm room to the children, and were lying down themselves in the shop. He was quite right. "Who's there?" was asked, with Sören Pedersen's Funen accent. "When the children awake, tell them that their mother will get better."

"That is delightful," returned the man from Funen, and behind him could be heard Aase's north country voice: "What is that he is saying?"

Kallem replied: "Come to dinner with me and bring the children with you!"

VII.

The whole of that night and the next day there was a tremendous fall of snow, and toward evening the wind rose to a perfect storm; it drifted and piled up the newly fallen snow in great heaps. The storm passed away; but the snow fell on with equal violence. People from the country who were going to the ball got the snow-plough to drive right down to the town; in the town itself they were driving it about for the second time that day. To the ball! to the ball! The first large ball at Christmas-tide.

To the ball! to the ball! In those larger towns, where dancing is a business kept up by the young people in turn at different houses and assemblies, no one there can have any idea of the upset caused in a small town by the prospect of the first Christmas ball, and especially amongst those young people from the country who drive in, ready-dressed for the ball underneath their furs. But just as the snow-plough good-naturedly pushes the superfluous snow to both sides, so does this old-established custom and their natural shyness do away with more than the half of all they had been romancing about together. A nice, well-behaved flock appears, who at first seem hardly to know each other.

Kallem was lying on the sofa, and was in capital spirits. That excellent woman, Sissel Aune, was recovering, the husband was going about to-day drunk with happiness, and with brandy, which the neighbours forced on him. The children had been there to dinner, although the servant did not approve of it; in that respect she was like Ragni, those two were like each other in many ways.

The children were not quite so shy as Andersen's children, who were also of the party. Kallem had played the piano for them, indifferently enough, but he had walked on his hands to perfection, and the saddler had had much to say about the mason Andersen's death. It was truth had killed Andersen; so many there are who live by lying that it is necessary some should be killed by truth, and more of such like rubbish, which Aase thought wonderful.

A long and very cheery letter from Ragni lay spread out on Kallem's stomach; he had been reading it through for the second time. Karl had enclosed a report of her state after the doctor's departure, and that was amusing too, especially a description of her first attempt at using snow-skates (which also proved to be the last). Through it all one could see her innate cowardice.

Now he was going to a ball where a minister's wife was to be patroness! She and her smart friend, Lilli Bing. Was Josephine doing this against her husband's wishes? It

was a public secret that such was the case; Lilli Bing had betrayed it to him. The minister's wife was the first ball-room lady in the town! The gentlemen fought for the chance of merely whirling her once round in a cotillon tour. He could see her in fancy, tall, bare-necked, dark-eyed, warm and glowing from dancing. Yes, he would have a dance with her too. He felt a longing to see her, he could not conceal the fact. He put Ragni's letter on one side, Karl's too, and the book he had been reading, then he got up, turned down the lamp, told the servant he meant to go out, then went up to dress.

It was quite extraordinary the quantity of snow that fell; not the star-like flakes, but broad big ones, chasing one after the other. If there had been the slightest wind it would have been impossible to find one's way. The lamps were dim, the light hardly reached beyond the glass, and there was not a sound all round. Rain has a sound, and has too a scenery of its own, but snow envelops and hides away everything, never does one feel so utterly alone as in the midst of a fall of snow. Kallem had not even a garden fence to guide him, he did not stumble over a single stone by the way, none of the trees in the garden either bowed or inclined their heads for him; he could no longer even see them, they were wrapped up and sent away. The church still stood there, but it was transformed into a heap of stones with a white staff up it. He and the church, and the church and he, there was none besides.

The houses down the street seemed to retreat in the background; they looked like so many great wizards sitting there with huge paws in front; once those paws had been stairs. A couple of boats lay up-turned down on the sand at the end of the beach street; they looked like white elephants at rest. The sea was like a sea of snow; but strange to say the island had floated loose and drifted away, it was no longer visible. It was full moon, according to the almanac, and it certainly was not dark, although the moon was snowed away from the bewitched world.

He trudged along like a sugar-loaf turned upside down. The falling snow and he

were the only moving things. It was barely ten o'clock, but still there were no eyes of fire glaring from out the house. Everything was shut up, extinguished, and snowed over. Nothing but the dimly burning lights in the lanterns bore witness that once there had been a living town there.

There, now he heard a clarinet squeak and a double-bass scrape--just as if somewhere a fox and a polar bear were hopping about together. There was tripping and there was tramping, the snowflakes were falling and the houses were deserted.

He advanced so far till he saw a smoking fiery mist round about a large house; it was from there the squeaking and scraping came. And thither he directed his steps.

Had he made a mistake? He fell, or nearly so, down into a restaurant, down into an atmosphere of tobacco, punch, and food. He saw some stout men sitting there like so many pigs buried in their fat. They were not in ball-room dress, but here came some who were. And when at last he found his way to the right stairs, several gentlemen in evening dress passed him on their way in search of tobacco and punch. Kallem hated and despised both tobacco and punch and all tavern life, and especially those men who could not dance without requiring stimulants.

No one ought to come late to a ball. He looked at the clock, it was past eleven and not only just ten as he had thought; either he had got home too late or he had stayed reading too long. A few young men, heated and perspiring who just came out through the smoke--each time the door was opened there was a good deal of smoky fog--wished him good-evening, thereby settling the fact of his arrival, so he pursued his way mechanically and took off his outdoor garments. In the passages were more heated and perspiring people. The one seemed to be running away just because the other ran, their conversation was meaningless, their eyes wild, their laughter like a tum-rum-tumming. There came ladies, too, three and four together, looking very much like full-blown roses; they laughed about nothing, talked about nothing, quite ready to be carried off through music and chattering. The instruments were worn

out, the lights were in a hazy mist, the chandeliers a gold red color.

The ball was overcrowded; it was difficult to make one's way through all the men who stood disengaged near the door; they were all together in a clump, a mixture of coarse and fine--a truly Norwegian mixture.

A waltz was being danced, part of the cotillon. Tall as Kallem was, he could soon see, now that his glasses were dry again, that his sister was not among the dancers, probably not in the room at all. But he forgot her, for in some respects this was an entirely new sight for him; he knew nothing of Norwegian life but the west country and Christiania. A ball in a little Norwegian provincial town is a peculiar thing. Ladies and gentlemen who would adorn any grand Parisian ball, move easily and lightly about among young people who take things heavily in daily life, never having learnt the art of dancing, but pound away in time with unabashed honesty. Men in tail-coats, men in frock-coats, women in low-necked ball-dresses, women in plain black stuff dresses, some elderly, some quite young, everyone enjoying themselves in his or her own particular way.

From the moment that Kallem had been so unfortunate as to find his way down into the restaurant or its vicinity, thereby plunging into the smell of punch and of tobacco-smoke, which he detested, from that moment he was out of temper and looked at things from the dark side. However, this passed away when he found himself in the ball-room and surrounded by so much joyful independence on all sides. A couple waltzed past him, he in frock-coat, she in a dark woollen dress fastened with a clasp; they had a firm hold of each other and never stopped but went on twirling carefully and solemnly round. A tall, fair young fellow in a short jacket brushed past them, probably a young sailor home for Christmas; he was dancing with a woman over forty, doubtless his own mother; she was still quite capable of holding her own through a regular topsail breeze. There went a well-known railway man, a thin individual in a tail-coat, with upturned face and hopping about with body

swaying from side to side; if he hopped on his right foot, the whole body went to the right, if on the left, then he bent to the left, always keeping time in the most conscientious way, and so happy--as happy as one of his own whistling engines; his partner laughed all the time but not in a shy way; on the contrary she was enjoying herself. And they kept on dancing, starting afresh almost the moment after they sat down. Then a business man swept by, directly after him an officer, both irreproachably got up, and with young, fresh partners in proper ball-dresses; then followed a mad-looking individual with long floating hair, dancing with a tall, dark woman. They dashed through the middle of the long ball-room, up and down, everyone was afraid of them and got out of their way as if they had been horses. Then came twirling round a tower-like man, a broad, round, high tower with a little thin lady leaning against him as though she were a ladder. The upper part of the tower did not move, only twirled round; if anyone had put a plate of soup upon the top, not a drop would have spilled. Then there were two who held out their arms like sails, two tall people, taking up as much room as three ordinary couples. But it seemed to be the established ball-room custom that everyone had a right to just as much room as they could manage to take up, and just as much speed as they wished, and in the way and style they preferred. Here everyone danced on their own account, and not for dancing's sake only, but to enjoy themselves.

But look at these two coming, they can dance! They came out from a side-room, a good-looking beardless cavalry lieutenant and a tall.... Josephine! She was in red silk trimmed with black, her firm neck, her rounded arms with their warm colouring, her luxuriant hair fastened in the usual knot, her wild-looking eyes, for they were wild, and that figure--truly, she was queen of the ball! How she danced! It was now the strength and natural suppleness of her body showed itself. And now the Irish blood in her came out strongly. Her brother pressed forward, almost breathless. And it seemed to him, that all stood staring at these two, who swung round now to the right, then to the left, then twirled round on the same spot, then dashing right round

the room. No fresh couples joined them, all were looking on, and little by little many stopped who were dancing; they wished to look on too. There was this drawback about the cavalry officer, that he was no taller than his partner, but he was a strong, manly-looking fellow who danced splendidly. For these two thoroughly healthy people dancing was a passion and intoxication; or it had that appearance. And it intoxicated others. Kallem could not resist it. He felt that he must dance, and with her too, and if possible immediately. The next time they went swinging past him he looked at her--looked at her in such a way that he knew she would be forced to look over in his direction. And she did so. She stood still, just as though someone had taken her round the waist and stopped her. "Many thanks!" said she to her partner. Instantaneously her brother stood beside her; but at the same time came her friend Lilli Bing. "Come and sit down beside me!" said she, and then, turning at once to Kallem, "How delightful to see you here!"

"I must thank you for the invitation," answered he, addressing them both. "But I have such a wish to dance with you, Josephine." He drew on his gloves. "Will you allow me?" and he bowed to the lieutenant who politely returned his bow. "Would you like it?" he said to Josephine.

She was rather breathless after the rapid dancing; but her dark eyes beamed. "Yes," answered she, softly.

The floor was again crowded with dancers, so they stood a little and waited. But as there seemed no chance of better room he put his arm round her waist so as to start.

"It will never do!" whispered she.

"Oh, yes it will!" said he, and started off, passing by everyone without either knocking them or letting himself be stopped; if there was danger he carried her rather than guided her past it. But soon he perceived that it was quite unnecessary; she bent and glided to the slightest pressure of his arm. They were not so alike that they quite suited, nor yet so unlike that they clashed; they became interesting for one

another and enjoyed a moment's reconciliation before the fight. They looked at one another from time to time, always simultaneously, he very red, she very pale.

Now the lamps shone brightly, the music was lively, the people happy and unaffected, and the ball-room splendid. They had not danced together since the days when he was the first cavalier of the balls, and she a disagreeable school-girl whom he graciously condescended to dance a few turns with now and again. But the way they held themselves and kept time, their pace, too, it was all like one, their dancing was light and graceful, they were so happy. But all they were thinking about could not now be discussed while they thus held each other entwined; it had all somehow got mixed up. They belonged to one another with all the strong connecting power of their natures, especially now that the depth of that nature had been reached. All that seemed to separate them fell away like some foreign or chance element. And as all the life they had spent together had been in the days of their childhood, and in another country, they felt themselves carried back there by the recollection of it. In the burning heat over there, by sea and shore, they rode on their little ponies, one on each side of that strange father, he had always looked so well on horseback.

The brother--taller than his sister--looked down on her broad-shaped head, he seemed to see his father's head again. She thought about her father, too, when she looked up into his sharp-featured face. All the same, he was more like their mother than she was; she recognized again in him all that had been so clever and good in their mother, although it was largely mixed with the stormy elements that had been their father's. She could have lain in his arms as though he were her mother, sure of him to the very end, in fact, just like that last evening they were together in their own town on the bay. And in all the world she had no greater longing than this.

Then the waltz came to an end.

Arm in arm they walked to the place Lilli had invited them to; they felt warm and grateful. They met Lilli with the cavalry lieutenant, she quite done up on account of

her being so stout, but he, as always, stiff, correct, and respectful.

Not long after this Kallem found himself in his overcoat, sealskin boots, his hands deep down in the huge pockets, and away out in the falling snow.

Either the brother and sister must now be left to themselves, or else he must leave. It had moved him greatly. He was very fond of her, and she, perhaps, even more fond of him. At this moment, when her spirit seemed to amalgamate with his, everything was left to shape itself as it best could and would. Something evidently weighed her down in daily life; it could hardly be religion; but what was it then? She always did exactly as she pleased, without reference to anyone; and yet she seemed to be more heavily burdened than most people.

It went on snowing and snowing; still there was light from the moon, although it was not visible. His sister seemed to be standing in the air in front of him, bare-armed and bare-headed, and with eyes of fire; in the distance he heard the music.

But when he found himself back in his own white bedroom, which the attentive servant had kept warm, then the dancing seemed all to be going on up in the forest district. There was Ragni borne along by the heavy wood-owner, so that she barely touched the floor with the tips of her toes; she whirled round with the small children, or hopped away with the "black-cock," or some dashing young fellow from the metropolis; he could see her delight after each dance, and could hear her: "Oh, how I am enjoying myself, Edward!" and so he fell asleep.

And the day after, just after he had dined alone and had gone into the big room from force of habit, for it was there that Ragni used to play for him, the door was opened and in came Ragni. He could hardly believe his own eyes! There she was, buried in all her furs! and he undid everything and dragged her out, plump, milk-white, and bewitching. He carried her off.

"Oh, well," said she, when they had calmed down after a little, "it was just always the same thing over again up there and I longed for you."

"Your nose is crooked!"

"And you, who have been to a ball!"

"Your nose is crooked!"

"It is hardly seen. But do you know that Karl is not at all nice? I must tell you."

"Karl?"

"Oh, not to me! To me he is always delightful; you can't imagine how nice. But totally different to his brothers and sisters; hasty, fearfully hasty, and capricious, a self-opinionated gentleman."

"I can imagine that of him."

"Do you know that was why I came away. We will be alone now, may we not? We have always had him hanging over us."

"Well, I never! Are you now tired of him, too?"

"I never said that. But to have him always about us, it is--really--tiresome."

"Well, perhaps it is rather tiresome, that's true enough."

"Yes, but now listen to me, I am going to ask one thing more; but you must be good, and not call me an æsthetic!"

"Well, what is it?"

"Don't let Kristen Larssen know that I have come back. Please not! Let us really have a little peace."

"But I have just got some children who----"

"No, no! No children either! oh, no!" and she began to cry.

"But my dear, darling Ragni----"

"Yes, yes, I know it is so selfish of me; but I cannot do it; it is not at all in my line."

Shortly after the piano was heard sending forth in chords of richest harmony a hymn of joy for her homecoming. Spirits of beauty took possession of the house. They

flew up to the roof, to the windows and doors; up to the bedroom, out in the kitchen; into the office, singing, singing, singing all the while, so the tubercular bacilli that the doctor was studying danced straight away to meet the song that was to deal them their death-blow; they sang right up to the kitchen door, so the whole scullery seemed to dance, the coffee-kettle boiled over and the new dress which Sigrid had got as a Christmas present from her mistress, ready-made, with velvet trimmings, and an upper skirt looped up with cord and tassels, fell to thinking of balls and dancing, up there under the roof, the highest thing in all the house.

VIII.

The next day Kallem was coming away from Sissel Aune, the washerwoman. He had been annoyed with her husband, who, in the abundance of his joy, had got his violin strung again, played at all the merry-makings and feasts, and made himself quite drunk. He wished to try with him what he had tried with Sören Pedersen, and he went round there in order, with their help, to get hold of the lyrical Aune. But he found "wife Aase" alone in the shop, occupied in helping one of Sissel's children up into a saddle; four of them were in the shop, the fifth was lying in the next room. Sören Pedersen was not at home; he was with Kristen Larssen, who was ill. Kristen Larssen? Yes, he had had dreadful vomitings, at last nothing but blood came up; but he would not see or speak to the doctor. Kallem determined to go there at once, but first of all he would have given a little help toward the keep of the children here, but it was refused. That very day Aase had sold two sets of harness and a bed with a spring mattress; they now had in the workshop a niece of Aase's, a woman who was also called Aase; to distinguish them from one another, Sören called the latter "Aase's Aase."

Kallem found Kristen Larssen in bed; he had some work in his hairy hands, and Sören Pedersen was reading aloud to him. In the corner between the window and the table, pressed closely to the wall, sat his wife, knitting; her kerchief was pulled so

far forward that the face was darkened. There was a very bad smell in the room. Kallem was much alarmed when he saw the sick man, he seemed thinner and more ashen gray than usual.

"Have you been eating many rich things this Christmas?"

"Well, we had some brawn."

"Have you been ill in this way before?"

"Oh, yes, now and then."

"Never as bad as this time," said she who was knitting.

"Do you feel any pain now?"

"Not just now. But it comes and goes."

"Is it in the chest and stomach?"

"Yes."

"And does the pain come often?"

"Oh, yes."

"Oftener and oftener every day," was heard coming from the corner.

Kallem examined him and found a swelling the size of a walnut in the pit of the stomach; Kristen Larssen knew of its existence too.

"Has this grown larger?"

"Oh, yes."

"It has grown very quickly," remarked she in the corner.

Kallem felt himself grow hotter and hotter. Why had he let himself be put off by the other's refusal of his help? The wife's eyes followed him about, her knitting-pins moved more slowly, she seemed to grow quite stiff; the doctor tried to keep a quiet countenance, but she was not to be taken in. Kristen Larssen's cold eyes also followed him about inquiringly. Kallem told them to open the register on the hearth

and leave it open the whole time, day and night; their fire-wood would suffer, but that could not be helped.

Sören Pedersen got up and opened it with great eagerness. Both Kristen Larssen and his wife looked disapprovingly at him; the fire-wood did not belong to him.

To gain time and calmness Kallem took up the books that lay there; they were some of his own English ones, and there was also a work on mechanics; then he began staring at the little toy the sick man had in his hands.

"What is that?"

Sören Pedersen explained that it was an improvement on the knitting-machine that Kristen Larssen had invented. As he went on with the explanation little by little, Larssen's fingers touched the wheels and the pins with so dexterous and soft a touch that it was easy to see the power of his mind and his love for his work.

All over the room, on the tool-chest, on the floor, up on the table, were piled up things for mending, from watches and guns to sewing-machines, coffee-mills, locks, and broken tools. Kallem's revolver had been taken out of its case, and he heard now that it was the only thing that Larssen had repaired since Christmas. All this talk of Sören's was a respite for Kallem; he knew now how he would manage. He spoke about diet and about medicine to relieve the pain, and asked Sören Pedersen to go with him to fetch the latter.

Hardly were they out in the street before Kallem said that there was no hope for Kristen Larssen; this was undoubtedly cancer in the stomach, and very far advanced too.

The self-sufficient cunning in Sören Pedersen's round shining face disappeared by all sorts of back ways, his face was a blank whose doors and windows all were open.

"I shall soon be able to give a decided opinion and then you, who know him better than I do, will have to tell him." Kallem quite forgot to speak about Aune.

Within a very few days the whole of the little town knew that Kristen Larssen, the jack-of-all-trades, was dying of cancer in the stomach; it was even in the papers. There they called him "an inventor and mechanician, well-known in our districts." Not a house did Kallem go to, nor did he stop to speak to anyone in the street, but they all asked after Kristen Larssen. When he went to see the sick man for the first time after Pedersen had told him what was the matter, there was not a word said about it. Larssen lay there with his invention in his hand, rather weak after a very severe bout of pain. His beard had been allowed to grow; he looked awful. His wife was knitting, but rather nearer to the bed. The English books had been put away, but that was the only outward sign that all thoughts of the future had been given up.

From there Kallem went round by Sören Pedersen's, who told Kallem that the former porter at the hospital had been at Larssen's to try and convert him; he would not like him to go straight to hell. Larssen had only answered that he did not wish to be detained; he was occupied with something which was very near its completion. Then came the minister. He began in a nicer and more careful way; but perhaps just on that account did Larssen lose all patience; he gave vent to all his collected bitterness in words that stung, and the woman with the knitting-pins and the projecting kerchief placed herself near the door. The minister understood and went away meekly; he had never been the same man since that affair with mason Andersen. But among his congregation this caused a good deal of scandal.

After a meeting of the young men's association their choir assembled together outside Kristen Larssen's house and began to sing a psalm, very softly. Others joined them, but all quite quietly. It happened that it was just during one of the sick man's fits of pain; he said it was like the constant pricking of thousands of pins--and whilst he was in such pain the singing only irritated him. So Kallem had to interfere and forbid all such doings. Two lay-preachers, the former porter and one other went to the doctor at the hospital to explain to him that it had all been done in the best intention, and that it would not do to keep God's word from a dying man. Kallem

lost his temper and answered rudely.

When he was down at Kristen Larssen's at the usual time in the evening he was certain he saw faces outside at the window. The sick man was just asking the doctor how long he had to live and if the pain would go on increasing, so Kallem took no further notice of what was outside except just asking to have something hung before the window. He was deliberating whether he should tell Kristen Larssen the whole truth, and he came to the conclusion that he might do so. He told him that it might last two or three months longer, and that the pain would become more frequent, although not every day equally often or equally violent. Larssen's wife stood by listening.

No one was standing by the window when Kallem came out, but a little farther up the street a lady was walking about slowly, as if she were waiting for somebody. When she saw him, she came straight up to him; it was his sister.

"Was it you looking in at the window down at Kristen Larssen's?"

"I!" said she, and he saw her face turn red under her hood; "it is not my habit to peep in at other people's windows."

"Excuse me; but I really saw somebody do it."

"Well, yes, I did do it,"

"Do you know them?"

"Yes. But I have come to speak to you, Edward. I knew you generally came about this time."

"What do you want with me?"

It was only now he noticed how agitated she was.

"Is it true you have said you will take the responsibility on yourself of Larssen's going to hell?"

"I don't believe in hell one atom."

"No, but did you say that?"

"I don't know. No, I don't think I did."

"Well, you see, others have a different opinion to you. And they feel indignant when they hear such words. You will lose all you have gained here by your work if you talk like that, I can tell you that." Kallem felt this to be so thoroughly like her old self.

"Yes, I daresay it is wrong to say such things. But by heaven, it is wrong to torment a man like Kristen Larssen, too. As long as he has his powers of reasoning, no one will get him to believe in hell; so they may as well leave him alone."

"That is not what they want with him either."

"Indeed, what is it then?"

"You know just as well as I do, Edward, and it is for your own sake I beg you not to scoff at earnest and loving people."

"I have no wish to scoff; I only say that they can spare themselves the trouble, and spare him too."

"He is too cold."

"Cold or warm, such things depend on one's disposition and manner of living."

"But people can live themselves into a state of coldness of the soul, and that is what he has done."

"May-be; but I know somebody who is warm enough, and who thinks exactly in the same way as Kristen Larssen. So it is not that."

"Well, what is it, then?"

"Thousands of things. She whom I allude to always puts her thoughts into pictures, and from the time she saw a very old drawing of the Trinity, a large body with three heads, and heard that the head in the middle was son to the two at the sides, the father and mother (for you know that the Holy Ghost began by being a woman),

from that time she never could believe in the Trinity; she laughed at it. And as I said before, she is warm enough."

"Fie!" hissed out Josephine, in all the strength of her indignation; "she may be warm, but she cannot be pure!" Kallem felt a stab at his heart; she was aiming at Ragni! His sister was cruel, and looked cruel like in her school-girl days, and he too became again the boy of those days; bang! he gave her a box on the ear. It hit the hood, but it was heartily meant.

With flaming eyes she flew at him like in the days when they used to fight. She whispered: "I think you----!" she trembled with rage and scorn, then she turned full of contempt and left him.

Had anyone seen them? They were alone in the street. He felt an indescribable fear; this might perhaps be visited on Ragni.

Kallem thought that the words "not pure," coming from Josephine's mouth, were a hit at what had happened in former years; that was why he was so indignant. But what would he not have felt if he had known that she was rather aiming at their present life? When the minister and his wife came home and kept away from them, the reason was partly that Kristen Larssen, the scoffer and blasphemer, was received in Kallem's house, that Ragni gave him English lessons, and that Kallem had long conversations with him. For the majority of the congregation Kristen Larssen appeared to be a regular devil, and when any new arrivals, both men and women, sought his company (like the Sören Pedersens), it was a great offence. Soon after Karl Meek came to live with them, and from that time Ragni was never seen anywhere except in his society. To crown all, they travelled up together to the wood district; this was too much when it a was a question of a divorced wife, who was both a free-thinker and might be accused of breaking her marriage bonds.

Josephine had come with the well-meant intention of warning her brother. If she had been allowed to talk to him quietly, she would have told him all this; she was not

afraid, and she was sincerely fond of him. But now she went back branded by his scorn.

Then all her pent-up passion burst forth! First and foremost, in bitterest hatred of her who separated brother from sister; but by degrees it turned to hatred of everything that caused it. The death of Andersen, the mason--the more her husband was upset by it, the more noticeable was the contrast between them--and at a particularly unfortunate time. All that Tuft complained of in himself was like making so many concessions to her, and now he intended to put an end to it. It could not have happened at a worse time.

In the house next to theirs lived a dried up old woman, the minister's mother; she was always protesting against the other house. She never put her foot inside it at any party, and seldom otherwise except for family prayers, and when she dined there on church festival days. Her daughter-in-law's manner, her dancing, her dressing, and her friends were an abomination to her, and the minister's perpetual love-making she thought ungodly. The little boy became her spy. Josephine was sitting one summer day on the other side of the open door, and heard her questioning him as to who had been there the day before, what they had had for dinner, and if they had drunk much wine, and how many different kinds. "Grandmother asks me if mother is going out to-day, too," said he one day. "And she asks me what father says to mother when she comes home, and if father slept upstairs with us."

Josephine took it very quietly. But the knowledge that her mother-in-law was at the bottom of all the minister's religious admonitions, did not make her more inclined to give in. She intended to live as she thought fit; he might do the same.

For him, it was the struggle of his youth, from the time that he for her sake had given up the idea of being a missionary and there was always the same result; he was so much in love that he was not master of himself. But not because she enticed him--just the contrary! When she sometimes became tired of him as of everything

else--for there were sudden changes in her moods--it was then that she appeared to him most lovely and most to be desired, like the women of the old legends. He could make no resistance then.

But the great task that God had imposed on him by the sick-bed of his friend, that showed him what he had neglected in his life; now he would feel the fruits of remission.

Whilst he had, after much self-examination, made up his mind that he could speak to his wife, she had been keeping all her struggles secret. After the last battle, she had at once decided what was the fairest thing to do--revenge was what she always called justice--but soon, too, it became clear to her that her brother had seen through her own dubious conduct. From the moment she had danced with him, she felt that no one thought so much of her as he; but since their last meeting, she had discovered that he despised her religious transactions. Indeed, he had every right to do so. She had never really counted the cost; she had always been content if her husband's faith and works were appreciated, if only she might be left in peace. Things could not continue like this; her brother's contempt was unbearable to her.

There were morning and evening prayers in the minister's house; grandmamma always came in, after her the maid-servants, and then the minister. Josephine did not always appear at morning prayers, and if they had any guests, evening prayers were given up. The minister always either began or ended with a prayer suitable to the occasion. At this period these prayers were lengthy and earnest, so Josephine stayed away altogether.

These solemn unctuous debates were her detestation, in public even more so than in private. The latter generally took place near bed-time, when their little boy was asleep and family worship was over; if she knew it was coming, she went to bed; he then seldom followed her; it was slippery ground to tread on up there. But this evening he did come. She had heard him moving in the study, and she now heard

him on the staircase. She did not lock her door, and she left the big lamp burning. But when he took hold of the handle, she exclaimed: "You must not come in."

"Why not?"

"Not as long as I am undressing."

"I will wait."

He went down again, and she began to undress slowly. Their bed-room lay over the study and looked out to the garden; to the right, through a curtain, was her dressing-room, just over the spare-room; to the left a door that led to another dressing room. Beside this was a staircase leading from the passage by the study. She could hear him coming up for the second time; she was now in bed. The door was in the middle of the room, just opposite the windows; their beds stood to the right of the door, hers nearest to it. The little boy slept at the other side, near the dressing-room.

He did not inquire again whether he might come in, but just opened the door. She lay in her white nightdress, her black hair done up in the usual knot; her head was propped by her left hand as if she were about to raise herself.

He sat down on the edge of her bed; she at once moved slightly backwards, as if she did not like to come in contact with him. He looked very black. "Josephine, you avoid me; it is not right of you; I require comfort and advice. The old trouble is upon me, Josephine, the day of reckoning cannot be postponed." He looked at her sorrowfully; she looked back silently at him. "You know what is the matter with me. I live here at your side in affluence and comfort, and amongst my congregation in earnest worship. But a Christian does not grow in grace in this way. The other day I was weighed in the balance and found wanting." He hid his face in his hands and sat silently for some time, as though he were praying. "Dearest Josephine!"--he raised his head--"help me! I must make an entire change in everything around me; I must live and work in a different way."

"How so?"

"I am not a true minister, and you are not truly a minister's wife; the following of our own wills leads us astray!"

"All these attempts of yours, Ole, to lead a different life commence with me and my house. Pray begin with yourself! I am as I wish to be; you can act as you think rightly yourself. As to our home, we only live as people of our means and tastes should do; if this does not suit you, well, you have your own private apartment to be in; you can arrange things as you like there. Should you prefer living separately, pray do so!"

"Yes," he answered, "I mean there must be a change in everything, even down to the household and the very bill of fare."

"I have not the slightest regard for these everlasting complaints of yours."

"That is because you do not understand the spiritual meaning."

She became quite pale. "I only know one thing," she answered him, harshly, "that is, I refused to be as sensual as you were, and that was the beginning of it all."

"You never will let me hear the last of that. But I am not ashamed to confess that the first crisis arose from the cravings of nature and your resistance; that opened my eyes. I am not ashamed to confess this. For when I proposed a total reformation----"

"And pray, did I forbid this?" she said, interrupting him. "Yes, I forbade you to begin trying your reformations on me; try them on yourself, Ole!"

He got up. "You don't understand me, nor do you understand God's will with regard to us. I still hold that there is a want of spirituality about you, Josephine; you have never given yourself up entirely to repentance and prayer, you never consecrated your life to all absorbing worship; your heart is not set on things above, only on the things of this world. You wish to be a Christian, but you do nothing to attain thereto. Why do you not answer? Won't you try? Now, together with me? Josephine? Oh,

how I do suffer, also on your account!" He seated himself humbly beside her again.

"Do you mean that I am to accompany you to the Zulus?" she asked, coldly.

"I mean that we should perfect ourselves together in all good works, dear Josephine, and that then God will direct our steps."

"I can't listen to idle talk," she answered; "say right out what you wish us to do!"

"We are to live amongst and for the poor, through faith in Jesus."

"Listen to me, Ole; I know how to do that better than you do. You have never watched at night by the sickbed of some poor person; I have often. And it is I who started the 'mutual association.'" (This was the name of an association consisting of some of the well-to-do women of the town, where every member bound themselves to provide work and help for their own special poor; Josephine was their leader, she distributed the work.)

"Yes," her husband assented, "you have administrative talent--like your brother. But living in luxury one's self, and now and then condescending to visit the poor, it is not that; no, one should live amongst and entirely for them."

"Shall we sell the house? Shall we move down to the poor part of the town? Tell me what your wishes are!"

"If God chooses us to do so, yes! But it must be done by and through faith, for Jesus' sake, Josephine, otherwise it is of no avail."

She answered not a word.

"What do you say to this, Josephine? Do you not wish us to try and lead a true Christian life?" his eyes were beseeching, his hand sought hers; "Josephine!"

She withdrew her hand. "No, you know, I cannot see why I should make my own life unpleasant; it would benefit no one, and only injure me."

"Do not say that! If only we could try! To believe in Jesus, and to live together only for the good of others."

"What nonsense! I can't help it, if it hurts your feelings; it is rubbish to say that one requires to believe in Jesus so as to help the poor. I don't care, I will say what I think."

"If you believed in Jesus, you would understand the reason why."

"I never said I did not believe in Jesus."

"Ah, Josephine, this kind of faith is worthless! You can't even fathom what real faith is? I am answerable for this shortcoming of yours; I who live year out and year in with you, and have got no further!" He bent down toward her; there were tears in his eyes. "How happy we might be together if you would but humble yourself before God--you who have such strength--and whom I love so dearly." He tried to put his arm gently round her.

"Faugh!" she exclaimed, and sat up.

He jumped up as though he were stung. She sat with flaming eyes--soon laid down again, both arms under her head; her bosom heaved, she was much agitated. "I do not know whether God will permit us to continue living together under these circumstances," he said.

"No, do just as you choose."

He turned from her, for he thought it beneath him to answer. The little boy groaned in his sleep and tossed uneasily. Tuft looked at him; the little fellow lay with his arm under him and half-open mouth; Tuft knew the forehead well, it was his father's over again, and was like his own too, the hair, the shape of the little hands and fingers, even to the very nails. But the day might come when even the boy would no longer be his own, if this continued.

"No, Josephine, things shall not continue in this way. God help us both; the struggle shall not end thus."

Behind the excessive goodness of his heart, all the breadth and strength of his nature

became evident; she felt this. It moved her deeply. She heard him wandering up and down in his study, restless, but with a set purpose. She could not sleep.

The day after Kristen Larssen had become aware of the nature of his disease, he committed suicide. It shocked people dreadfully; he haunted the place; hardly anyone dare pass the house. A rumor got abroad that Kallem had lent Larssen his revolver for this purpose; but it was put an end to by his wife, by Sören Pedersen, and by Kallem's own testimony.

Kristen Larssen had retired from this world without warning and without thanks. He had said to his wife that sudden death would be best. But neither had they come to any mutual agreement or reckoning, nor had they taken leave of each other. He had begged her to go and fetch Sören Pedersen, and whilst she was away, had crept out of bed and, with his usual cold-bloodedness, had done the deed.

The regular funeral rites were refused to him; a corner by the north wall was selected, and three men worked hard to get a grave dug. The funeral day was unusually cold; some there were who fancied they saw the finger of God in that too. At quite an unusual hour, namely in the afternoon, Kristen Larssen was lowered into his grave without the toll of a bell, without priest or psalm. The most remarkable among the few people who were present was Aune, for he was drunk and fussing about everywhere--so thinly clad that it made one shiver to look at the poor wretch, blue with cold. Sören Pedersen told him several times to keep quiet; but to no avail. The only visible part of Sören's shining face was his nose, eyes, and a bit of the cheeks; all the rest was covered by a huge woollen comforter, wound round and round, and by a fur cap drawn well down to the eyes; his great big hands were in a pair of huge woollen gloves, of the kind that fishermen use for rowing; and his feet were in fur boots. Sören Pedersen had grown rather stout, his greatcoat was somewhat too tight; he looked like a lobster with all these excrescences; Aase, in a little cloak and hood, kept by the side of the widow, who stood there tall and thin, in

Laplander shoes and loose ample dress, as wide at the top as at the bottom; she wore a heavy woollen shawl over her head; she evidently wished to conceal her face. Aune slouched round to tell her that he had been "to the station with her luggage." And now "he had shut up the house; he had the key in his pocket;" he took it out and showed it. The poor widow was to go direct from here to the station, and stay with some of her relations who lived at a few miles distance; and later, go on to her native town. Besides these four there were two of the sextons present; one of them stood with short coat and mittens, leaning on his spade, incessantly chewing tobacco; the other was almost covered by a brown beard, crook-backed, and dim-eyed.

There was a tightly packed snow-drift under the wall; Karl Meek and Ragni came along together and got up on to the snow-drift. They were all waiting for Kallem, who had been detained, but now came along at full speed. He took off his cap to the widow, and was greeted by the others as he went up to the grave. He wished to say a few words, but waited to see if nothing else would happen. As nothing did happen, he said:

"I am not acquainted with the past life of the man we are about to bury; neither did I know him well personally. He had different religious convictions to those of the people he lived amongst, and he has been punished for them. His and his wife's object in life was to be able to go to free America." (At the word America there was a general movement amongst the handkerchiefs.) "He tried to teach himself English; for him it would have been like getting wings.

"But having said this much, and when I add that he was the cleverest man I have met with here, I have said about all I know of him.

"Therefore I cannot join in judging him. I often had the impression, whilst we sat together, that he was always cold. The cold around him had chilled him to the bone.

"It so happens that only we five or six people are here to take a last farewell of him. Yet all those who benefited by his ingenious work, most particularly those whose

life has been eased by his clever inventions, thereby affording them greater enjoyment--all those owe him thanks, which I am here to express."

A deep stillness ensued; one could hear the snow creak when anyone moved; but no one attempted to leave. At last Aune reeled forwards to the edge of the grave. "Well, at least I will thank you for the violin! Oh--and the forgiveness of sins, oh, oh, fare thee well!"--within an ace he had fallen into the grave. In great disgust Sören Pedersen seized him by the arm, turned to his wife, and said: "Dearest Aase, you say the Lord's Prayer so beautifully; let us have it!" And she stepped forward, pulled off her mittens, and folded her hands. The men took off their caps and bowed their heads; and then Aase repeated the Lord's Prayer.

The first heavy lumps of earth were then thrown on to the coffin; it sounded as though it were being crushed.

Kristen Larssen's wife came up to Kallem. He could now observe her close by, suffused in tears, worn out by want of sleep; she had lost nearly all her strength, and her last hope; but she took his hand with a firm grasp, gazing at him with sorrow-stricken eyes, she nodded with suppressed feeling, she could not speak. No one could have received warmer thanks. Ragni was much startled when she likewise took her hand, for she knew she did not deserve it. The widow hurried past the others and went down toward the town, Sören Pedersen and Aase had much difficulty in keeping up with her. But Ragni clung to Kallem's arm, she would have liked to have hung round his neck, and wept bitterly.

IX.

Kristen Larssen's house remained without a tenant, no one cared to either buy or rent it; the gloom that had fallen over it spread even to his friends. It was lucky for Sören Pedersen that his customers were principally from the country, and not from the town, otherwise it would have fared badly with him. Ragni did not know that she was more watched and talked about now than ever; she was not at all careful. The

very fact that the minister's family refused all intercourse with them, made her a target for evil tongues; her character could not bear any more.

She was quite defenceless against the things they accused her of, as she did not know what they were. If she and Karl Meek held each other's hands on the ice; or if he made her laugh whilst putting her skates on; or if she tried to push him off when they stood each on one of the runners behind the doctor's sledge; or if they ran together with the hand-sledge, or played duets for some visitors--someone had always noticed a look that could not be mistaken, heard words that had some hidden meaning, or seen liberties taken that only those could take who were accustomed to take still greater ones. It was so with the last lodger, now again with this one; what else could Kallem have expected? It was only his just punishment.

Sören Kule's relations were the ring-leaders; they were numerous in this part of the country, and had fertile imaginations--particularly about immoral things.

It was choice to hear Lilli Bing describe how Ragni Kule that was, went in "every evening" to the student Kallem's room; it was in the same passage. "Dear me, what harm could there be in that, as they loved each other? Who could have gone on living with that disgusting Sören?"

She insinuated that Kallem's present wife did not even require to cross the passage. One of her remarks was, "What harm can there be in it, as she never gets children?"

How was it that none of those whom it concerned never heard anything? That none of the usual anonymous letters ever reached them? The first can only be explained by the fact that they scarcely ever associated with anyone, and the second, that people probably thought that Kallem would not take the least notice of them; free-thinkers generally have rather loose ideas about morality. Toward the beginning of spring, Kallem was seen accompanying his wife and Karl Meek to the steamer; they were to cross to the other coast; he was seen to fetch them again on the pier, Monday forenoon. They knew that he was out all day, and that the other two were

together in house and garden all day long.

Karl's examination went off satisfactorily, but of course with much anxiety; the day was near at hand when he was to leave them. On the whole, it had been pleasant to Ragni to have him there, but his unstability gave her much trouble, and his passionate nature grew with his bodily strength. His great devotion to her kept this in subjection; but the way it often showed itself was a great trial to her; she loved stability and peace. She prophesied that the day would come when things would not go well with him; he carried too much canvas.

She longed to be able to be alone again; she said so to Kallem, who teased her by saying that in three weeks she would have to do without Karl. He was first to be at home for the summer holidays, but from there travel down to Germany to study music. Although he had accustomed himself to live and think under Ragni's eye, in strife with her, in subjection to her, in constant adoration; still he liked the idea of being independent. The separation would not be difficult.

But it so happened that, on one of the last days, he was at a friend's house--the only one he now and then saw since he came to the Kallems--and in speaking of his departure his friend said:

"How do you stand with regard to Kallem's wife?"

Karl did not grasp his meaning, and began singing her praises ecstatically. The other interrupted:

"Yes, I know all about that; but to make a clean breast of it, are you her lover? People say so."

Karl asked how he dared to say such a thing? He should be answerable for his words! But it was his friend's intention seriously to warn Karl; he had only just heard the report himself, it had not got about much yet. He bore Karl's raging patiently, and told him that he could scarcely expect otherwise than that people would think there was something in it, as they had been so very imprudent.

They could not at all understand at the Kallems what was the matter with Karl, all of a sudden. He had hardly been in to them the last few days, was seldom at home, and had become every bit as silent, shy, and gloomy as when he first came. The probability was that he was in despair at the prospect of parting from them, and especially from Ragni; but it was strange that this despair should have begun exactly between three and five o'clock on Wednesday afternoon. At three o'clock they had played duets together and had been in the best of spirits; at five o'clock she had fixed to go through some of the last remaining work for his examination with him, but he came home so hopelessly absent and inattentive, that they were obliged to give it up. From that day he had been always like that. Kallem teased Ragni, and told her the youth was in love; it had come over him suddenly, just before the "bitter hour of parting." Kallem sang: "Two thrushes sat on a beech-twig," and prophesied that she would very shortly receive a declaration, probably in verse; he himself had done the very same in his day. May-be he would shoot himself. She need not imagine that anyone at his age could escape the charms of her crooked nose without a little heart-chill.

When the youth sat staring down on her in alarming silence, neither eating nor uttering a word; when he played in the most melancholy style, and always left them to seek solitude; then Kallem said: "How black is life!" He imitated the youth's languishing eyes at her, went sighing upstairs, passing his hands through his hair and crying. But to Karl himself he was excessively kind.

When the hour of parting came, there was an end to all joking, for Karl was in such a state of despairing grief that no one could speak to him; they only tried to hurry him away. Ragni would not go with them to the station, his exaggerated manner quite alarmed her. But when Karl saw that she was still standing on the steps, he jumped down from the carriage and rushed up to her again. She retreated, but he followed her, looked at her, and cried so bitterly, that the servant who stood a little behind them felt so sorry for him, that she began to cry too. Ragni remained cold

and silent; she could have no idea that Karl was then doing the noblest deed he had done--feeling more deeply than ever before in his life.

There were people at the station who noticed his great despair, as well as Kallem's serious face. Especially did they notice that Ragni was not of the party. Had Kallem heard anything?

This conclusion to their intercourse with Karl Meek left an uncomfortable feeling. They did not willingly speak about him; in fact, they both felt a doubt as to whether they had done right in having him in the house; they ought to have foreseen that it would end like that. But nothing was said about this either by one or the other of them. Their own life together drew them closer and closer to each other; never before had Kallem been so much at home, or taken such an interest in all her doings.

The whole summer was devoted to the "fever pavilion;" they were never tired of watching the building, or of seeing it all arranged and put in complete order. And now that all the summer tents stood there, the good arrangement and order of the hospital was quite the talk of the place.

But whilst they were thus alone, dividing their time between the hospital, their studies, the garden, and the piano; indeed, just because they were alone, something seemed to affect all their moods, something they had both thought of for long, and that grew and grew for that very reason that they never mentioned it. Soon they could hardly be together without fancying they read something about it in the other's eyes.

Why could they have no children? Was the fault Ragni's? Would she do nothing in the matter?

By degrees he had found out that she was too shy to allow of his being the one to mention it. Would she not venture to speak about it herself? Not even show a wish to say something, so that he could help her out with it? What was the reason? Was it terror of an examination--an operation? He seldom saw her now without feeling that

she was thinking about it. And she for her part thought: he misses a child.

The end of August, Ragni got a great big letter with the Berlin postmark on, from Karl Meek! It was most welcome to both of them, more than they would at first allow.

Karl had been to the festival at Bayreuth, he depicted his impressions in glowing colours and enthusiastic language. The whole letter was taken up by that, and four or five lines of thanks and greetings--and at the end a question: "May I be allowed to write to you again?" They both felt at once that the real letter consisted of these four or five lines, all the rest was just an intellectual envelope. Kallem quite approved, and was anxious that she should begin a correspondence with him; it might in more ways than one benefit him while he was abroad.

Without feeling particularly inclined--as had often been the case when she and Karl studied together--but more in a spirit of obedience and good nature, she sat herself down and wrote humorously, as she got over it best in that way, and had an answer from him--first one, then another, long, long letters, whole diaries.

Ragni was in the garden one day, early in October, gathering fruit and things for the kitchen. She went across to the railing by the church road as a carriage came driving slowly upwards. A very stout man sat on the seat, swaying about with the jolting of the carriage, like milk in a pail. Ragni's pigeons were winging their homeward flight from the church roof and flew just over the carriage; the peculiar flapping of the wings made him turn his head in the direction they were flying. "Are those pigeons?" asked he, and the coachman answered.

Ragni was just going to climb up on a ladder to gather some apples, but she had to hold fast; that heavy voice, that drawling dialect, and that north country monotony, all that belonged to Sören Kule! His blind eyes were partly turned to where the pigeons were, and partly to where the answer had come from, as he was driven slowly rumbling away.

Sören Kule here? Surely a blind, half-paralyzed man does not go travelling about? The inheritance which twice had fallen to his share, could it be that, that had brought him here?

Shortly after, Kallem arrived. She saw directly that he too had met Kule, and he saw at once that she had retreated into the big room to hide herself; they met there, she laid her head on his shoulder; it seemed to her there were evil spirits in the air.

Kallem said to himself: If Sören Kule has come to take possession of one of the places bequeathed to the family, and is going to move up here, then Josephine must have had a hand in it; her "spirit of justice" has been on the alert.

The only person in the whole world whom he thought he had not treated well, and to whom he had not tried to make amends, was this blind man.

I will go and seek him out, he thought; I will speak openly with him. I can at the same time make it clear to him, that for Ragni's sake he must not remain here.

He soon heard where Kule lived: in the house just behind theirs; in the park, next to the hospital!

So this share of the inheritance had fallen to him; and were they to have him here every day?

He walked about a long time trying to gain some control over himself; but when he stood in front of the house, he was still so indignant that he had difficulty in keeping calm. It was a little stone house two stories high and with a garden in front; in the passage he could hear sounds of washing up from the kitchen, and looked in there first. There stood the Norland giant kitchen-maid with tucked-up sleeves, as unchanged as if they had parted yesterday. As the door opened, she looked over her shoulder and recognised directly the tall man with the spectacles, with hooked nose and bushy brows; she smiled and turned round to him. "Surely that is Kal-lem?" she sang out.

"Yes."

"I was told yesterday that you lived here," she smiled still more.

Oh, you sly fish, thought he, you have known it a long time.

"When did you come here?"

"We came yesterday."

"From Kristiania?"

"From Kristiania; Kule has inherited this house, and folks say living is cheap here." A door opened at Kallem's back, he turned round; a squarely built man with small, clever, but suspicious looking eyes, put his head cautiously out at the door. Kallem shut the kitchen door, the other then came quite forward and shut the room door; so they stood opposite to each other. But the kitchen door was opened again, and the Norland servant girl looked out and smiled to the man. Kallem guessed there was some sweet secret.

"Is that your husband?"

"Yes, since last sum-mer." The man looked like a sailor.

"Can I see Kule to speak to?"

The square man put on a very solemn expression; he would go in and ask. He stayed away a long time, Kallem heard them arguing, now Kule's monotonous drawl, now the other's short, dry Trondhjem dialect, both voices lowered. Meanwhile Oline told him all about her husband, that he had been pupil at a seminary, had passed a mate's examination, spoke Spanish, and was now Kule's secretary and right hand. Then she told him about the "children," that they were at Fru Rendalen's school in the west country; though for that matter, said she, the school belongs no longer to Fru Rendalen, but to the son, "who used to live with us."

And then all at once: "And your wife? How is your wife? So you made her your little wife, eh? Oh, how delightful it will be."

The door was opened, the square man stood aside and let Kallem pass in to Kule. He

sat in the very same big roller-chair, with the same board before his legs, with the same Spanish pictures round him, the same furniture, only it had another and very faded covering. The piano and the children's toys were missing.

The man himself was very gray and had grown much stouter. The "swimmers" lay as usual on the arms of the chair; a long pipe stood beside him, quite empty.

Kallem gave his name; Kule did not answer, but a slight movement of the healthy hand and some deep groans showed that he was agitated. Kallem too had difficulty in keeping quiet. To cut short the agony, he remarked at once, that Kule was perhaps not aware that they were neighbours?

Yes, he was.

"I should not have thought so," replied Kallem, clearly showing by his tone of voice what he thought. Kule was silent.

"Shall you remain living here?"

"Yes."

Kallem looked at the blind countenance; it was cold and impenetrable. Kallem felt it would be useless to expect him to have a shadow of regard for Ragni; he was seized with a terrible loathing. "Then I have nothing more to say," said he, and got up.

The kitchen door stood ajar. "Be so good as to give my respects to your wife!"

It was only when he found himself outside that Kallem remembered the original object of his visit; but Kule's increased brutality freed him from any obligation. Consequently, in future he was to be their neighbour. They must therefore try and bear their own past, as others did. He hurried on, away from the town; he dared not at once go home. She could not bear anything bad or wicked in any shape whatever; he must think over the best way of taking this.

When he at last reached home again, Ragni was in the office and had lit the lamps there. At once she read her doom in his face--ay, had even heard it in his footstep.

She sank down in her chair and felt as though there never more could be any happiness in life.

He tried to make it clear to her that, as she was not to blame, she ought not to be afraid; she shook her head, for it was not that. No, it was the cruelty of it, that was what she could not stand; the cold chillingness. She reminded him of what he himself had said by Kristen Larssen's grave.

But surely they could not compare themselves to Kristen Larssen? They had so much of all that gave warmth. Yes, certainly--but a good name! "In depriving me of that, they shut out all warmth." And again, in a little while: "This is the cold chill." She did not weep, as she usually did.

"Then we will go away from here!" exclaimed Kallem.

As though she had long since been considering the matter, she answered: "What doctor is rich enough to buy up all that you have sunk in this place? And your work? Work that you live for and that gives you so much happiness? No, Edward!"

"But I can do nothing, if you are going to be unhappy," and he kissed her. She did not answer.

"What are you thinking of?"

"Yes, I believe you can."

"What is it that I can?"

"Work and be happy without me," answered she, and burst into tears. He folded her in his arms and waited quietly; she must feel that she had wounded him. "In reality I am not suited to you."

"But, Ragni dear!"

"Oh, yes, as your good friend and comrade, the best you have in the world; would that I might be it for long!"

She pressed closer in to him, as though wishing to put a seal on his silence.

X.

The next day was foggy. Although Ragni had slept well and dreamlessly, her head felt heavy and she went about in the same cheerless way as yesterday; there was no longer any gloss on anything. At first she would not even go to the kitchen; she imagined that from the window there she could see the house where Kule lived. However, she had doubts about it and ventured out; she could not see it. Then she dared not go for her morning round in the garden; he might come driving past. At last she sat down to the piano, but got up again without playing. Then she wrote a letter to Karl; she owed him an answer to two of his, and she must occupy herself with something. She wrote according to the mood she was in, that all kinds of wickedness, lying, treachery, double dealing, arbitrary persecution, cunning, deceit, were like a death-chill. It was that we had to fight against; for life is warmth. Some people were more susceptible to cold than others; just as some could suffer from tubercular disease, and others not, and she was surely one of those unfortunate ones. From the time she was a child she had been exposed to many a cold chill, and at last this rush of cold air was stronger than were her powers of resistance; this was the whole question.

It was not a long letter; for in thinking of her childhood and of all she had gone through later on, until her marriage with Kule, she felt a desire to write it all down, and, when the occasion offered, to give it into Kallem's faithful keeping. She could not tell it him by word of mouth; but could she write it? Yes, now she could. A vague fear urged her on, and she began that same day.

She summoned up all her strength to enable her to be calm and collected when Kallem came home. He looked searchingly at her, but was himself in a great state of excitement about something fresh and quite different. He was about to perform an operation that both the other doctors, and a third who had been called in from some distance, thought doubtful.

One of the most highly thought of men in those parts, a Colonel Baier, had suffered for more than a month from inflammation of the coat of the stomach with symptoms of septicæmia. The military surgeon, Dr. Arentz, was his family doctor, and treated him in the usual way, with water compresses and opium. But the illness was a serious one, and Arentz wished that Kallem should join in the consultation. The wife was opposed to this--not exactly because she was a zealous Christian, but because she had an uncomfortable feeling when with Kallem. She was a good, warm-hearted creature, but hysterical, and such people are generally either violently for, or violently against, one. Tuft, the minister, had once saved her; she was ill from sheer weakness, nothing did her any good, until he came and roused her will by faith--a fact none could dispute; since then she raved about him.

The doctor from the neighbouring district, together with Dr. Kent, were both sent for; but both were honest enough to say that nothing could be done, the colonel was rapidly dying, and an operation would be impossible.

But now her love for her husband proved stronger than her antipathy for Kallem; she had the horses put to the carriage and drove herself to fetch him; he was willing to perform the operation and at once. Without allowing himself to be over-ruled by the others' objections, he opened the abdominal cavity, discovering therein pus, and also opened the large intestine.

This incident called for all his strength of character, especially as the others had been so opposed to it. The colonel was looked up to and respected by all; all were interested, both in town and country, and his wife's state was such that, should the husband die, she would go out of her mind. From having disliked Kallem, she grew to have the most unbounded confidence in him; his presence seemed to magnetize her. Kallem was, of course, very anxious.

Ragni found other things to think of besides herself when she saw in what a state of anxiety and responsibility he was in before the operation, and it was even worse the

first few days after. In such like emergencies she would always keep all petty trifles from him with rare tact, encouraging and pleasing him, living solely and entirely for him. To be allowed to be something for such a man as that, that in itself spread "warmth" enough!

The colonel recovered, Kallem went about in the best of humours, Ragni took up her playing again, and all her usual work, even ventured out into the garden and allowed her eyes to wander to the house up yonder! She heard the carriage rumbling past without trembling more than the least little wee atom; she was accosted by the Norland servant going to market with her basket, and although she felt it was like being stung by a snake, yet she survived it. One day she even managed to talk to her--and accustomed herself to expect her coming every morning without making her escape. This was not because she was courageous, far from it; but she did it, and felt more at her ease.

The weather changed to severe cold; the leaves blew about in the north wind, the fields were frozen and covered with hoar-frost every morning, the stoves burnt with a roaring noise rivalling the rumbling of carts and carriages outside on the hollow-sounding frosty ground. Each day there was a suggestion as to putting in double windows and shutting up the balcony doors; each day it was put off. There might possibly still be some fine days.

One day she had had letters from America, from Norland, from Berlin--the latter was from Karl; she had opened them all, but had not read any of them; there was too much to do getting the house ready for the winter. Still she found time to read her sister's letter in the afternoon, and it troubled her; her sister was not well; Ragni thought about getting her down to stay with her. The last two or three letters from Karl had been decidedly home-sick ones, he felt so melancholy; so she had no particular wish to peruse this last letter. She was just then reading an American novel, one of Howell's best, an impressive and exciting soul-picture; so she sat down

to that first when she went into the office toward evening. But something in the story reminded her of Karl, so she laid the book aside and took out his letter. As usual, page upon page, very interesting, but so thoroughly heart-sick. When she came to the last sheet, there was written on it in red ink: "Read this when you are alone!"

He wrote: "From the moment I received your letter about the 'chill cold of wickedness,' I have been uncertain whether or no I would tell you that I understood it at once. For long I have known what was said about us. Such a cruel slander! It was this that nearly drove me mad last summer, when I heard of it just before we parted. Is it not terrible? I thought that there could not possibly be anything that would wound me deeper than this; but now it has come: You have heard of it too--that must be the meaning of your letter.

"For weeks I have thought about it. But it is better, for my own sake and for yours, that we should speak about it! Do not let Kallem hear of it! I am so dreadfully ashamed, I am so unhappy--ah, if you knew how unhappy I am! but let us spare him!

"Therefore I write this on a separate sheet, and will always do so in future.

"Also on account of something else which I am now coming to, my dear, my darling!

"From the very beginning when you were so good to me, you were most dear to me; I could not think that you or anyone could be more dear. But now we are as it were linked together by this shame and grief, we two must bear it alone, and now, God knows, I only live, suffer, and work in thought of you. You are ever with me, from morn till eve, and in my dreams at night.

"I love you, love you, love you! I write this weeping. I love you, love you, love you!

"Perchance this word shocks you, shocks you more than what has gone before and has called it forth. But if you knew what joy it is just to write it down and know that you will read it! You are so good, and you know that I have the most unbounded respect for you."

When Kallem came home at eight o'clock, the supper table was laid in the dining-room; the lamps were lighted in the office, and it was warm; but both rooms were empty, the big room was dark. Sigrid came in with the tea, and told him that her mistress had gone to bed.

To bed? was she ill?

"I think she was only tired."

Kallem went upstairs directly. It was dark; but he saw in the moonlight a white arm in a night-gown stretched out toward him. "Forgive me," she said; "but I felt so tired, and then there was a letter from my sister which made me sad. No, don't light the candles! It is so nice like this."

What a fresh and healthy atmosphere there was about him, his voice was so strong as he answered: "From your sister?"

"Yes, she does not thrive up yonder."

"Suppose we get her down here?"

"I was just going to ask you for that. How good you are!" and she began to cry.

"But, my darling, why do you cry? I assure you the only reason why I did not speak of it sooner was, that you wanted so much for us to be alone."

"Yes, of course it is delightful. But supposing one of us were to be ill?"

"Nonsense, we are not going to be ill. You are strong now too. Your head is rather hot. Let me feel your pulse! Oh, it is nothing but rest that you need. It was right of you to go to bed. I shall go down and have my supper, I am ravenous; then you can be quiet. You had a letter from Karl?"

"Yes, it is lying on the desk."

"All right, I shall read it while eating. After that I must be busy. Good-night!"

He kissed her, she put both her arms round his neck, drew him down to her, and kissed him. "You darling!"

He went away; she heard his quick step on the stairs and going to the room door; heard him open and shut it.

Again there was that pain in her chest which his coming had dispelled, his very footstep scared away. It was something oppressive, dreadful, unheard-of, something she would never get rid of, and then she began to shiver. Cold, cold, cold; now it had reached to the very innermost. She felt now, with a shudder, why "the whale" had come and taken possession of the little house close by, and would not ever leave it. Now she knew why the others had allowed it.

"Alas! what has happened, what have I done?" moaned she, and tried to hide from herself. Karl's words of love sounded like a whispering voice amid thundering billows. Poor boy! She lay there in the dark that she might not be seen, and in order to think it over. What ought she to do? She had kept back that last sheet, ought she to show it to Kallem?

When Kallem came up to bed shortly after twelve, she had fallen asleep in the midst of all her sorrowful reflections. He lighted the candle behind her, looked into her face, and listened to her breathing. She was sleeping innocently, open-mouthed.

The next morning she walked backwards and forwards before the south side of the house, equally terrified, equally undecided. There had been snow, but it was nearly all melted again; it was the first snow that winter. A thick fog lay over the mountain ridges, so thick that it looked like a separate, impenetrable country, bordering on the mountains and stretching as far as the eye could reach. A long tongue of this strange country jutted out into the wood like a secret of utmost importance. She felt cold, she could not go far without being seen by people on the road, and to-day she could not let herself be seen, perhaps never again.

A useless fight that, among the different kinds of trees round about the farms. Furthest away from the houses a forest of firs; it looked almost black through the heavy mist; nearer to the houses a wood of leafy trees began, long-necked aspen and

twisted birch, showing light yellow against the dark; nearer still there was mountain-ash and bird-cherry, blood-red in colour; maple, too, and other trees in endless variety of shades, from colourless as flax to deep red-gold. Tall asps and alders, too old to bear foliage, spread their naked branches out over the bright colours of the others, like blue-gray smoke.

She stamped her feet, but could not get any warmth into them; she would not go further, nor yet go in before she had decided what she was to do! What if Kallem did get to know of it? And what if he did not?

The meadows were divided in two by ploughed fields. Besides that there were only dull green fields of rye, sown in harvest-time, clover-fields in stubble. But see those discontented gray-looking fields further away from the houses, that are never noticed except when they are to be plundered; there are too many of them in the country.

But Juanita? How did she get into this harvest picture? The freshest, clearest reminiscence of that first spring? Ah, now awoke her longing for the children. Now she was sure that he was not where they were; so she could travel down to Rendalen's and see them.

As long as that lasted she would not be forced to decide what was the right thing to do; and she needed a respite. Just a short little letter to Karl Meek, that he must not write to her oftener just now, perhaps later on; she would let him know. These few words to Karl--should she telegraph them? Not from here! But she would start at once and telegraph on her way.

There arose in her a purpose, a command as strong as though she had nothing left for her to do but to see the children once again. When Kallem came home soon after, and she was pacing up and down the floor to try and get her feet warm, she said to him that she must see the children again, and it seemed to him that the recollection of her life together with Kule had turned into a longing for the children; this was

very natural. "Start at once!" said he; "later on it may be too cold." He did not quite mean it to have been to-day; but that was what she wished, and in the afternoon he took her to the station.

As soon as she arrived at the Rendalens, she wrote a despairing letter, the meeting with the children had been terrible; they did not know her! And she, too, hardly recognised them! They were certainly well brought up children, but not as though they had belonged to her sister; there was no family likeness there, but a likeness to him, the father--he come of a stronger race. They were big, fat children; they stared at her without being able to understand her. And all the other strange faces, always noticing and watching her. She would have gone home again directly, if she had not had such a very bad cold. Her next letter was a little more cheerful; not because she was better pleased with the children--they were just like strangers and were wanting in "spirituality;" each time she took them in to her room to talk to them, or play for them, she could feel that it bored them. But her intercourse with the excellent people at the school and in the neighbourhood, afforded her great pleasure; "if only we had something similar," said she, with a sigh.

He had a letter from Rendalen, too, expressing, in strong terms, the delight of the entire little colony at having her amongst them. He put forward "an unanimous request" to be allowed to keep her for a time; she seemed tired after her journey and not very well; it would be good for her to have a rest.

She remained away a fortnight altogether. She came home again one cold day in mid-winter, looking pale, having still a bad cold, and very nervous, incapable of saying how dreadful it was for her to be again amongst people who looked upon her as an improper person. Kallem was alarmed at her cold and at her looking so ill; their meeting could hardly be called a meeting, there was an anxious examination of her chest, a languid account of her visit; she was tired and wished to go to bed.

Kallem asked if she had had any letter from Karl? None had been received here. No,

she had had none either. Had she not written to him? No, Karl had confided a secret to her which she did not approve of. Often before there had been, so to speak, knots on the thread, which had only been explained to him later, and now, as she did not look up at her husband, he felt that he ought not to ask questions.

She was in bed several days. There was no getting rid of a nasty dry cough she had; otherwise there were no dangerous symptoms; none at all. The first day she was up he thought she had grown very thin; her face had a tired, delicate expression, and there were dark rings under her eyes. She longed for fresh air, but she refused, in the most determined way, to go for any walks outside the garden. At first she said it was so tiresome; when that excuse did not hold good, she hit upon a better one: she began to cry. He thought this was a strange symptom; was it possible that she was in the family way? He comforted himself with this hope and waited. She went for walks in the garden, and then told him about them with much pride; but she hid from him the fact that she always went out at dusk. Meanwhile she herself thought she was better, and he fancied so too.

Time went on; he was expecting that which he longed to hear, and thought he noticed other symptoms; but he was alarmed too sometimes, as she seemed to him to grow thinner and thinner; he could not get her to eat. One evening, when he was out, she had as usual gone into the garden and walked about at dusk, had felt a chill afterwards, and great oppression on the chest! She was asleep when Kallem went to bed, but he was awakened later by her coughing. He lit the light and saw that she pressed her hand to her chest.

"Have you a pain there?"

"Yes."

"Where is the pain?"

"Here!" and she pointed to the right collar bone.

"Does it hurt you there when you cough?"

"Yes." And at that moment she was seized with a violent fit of coughing. He got up, dressed himself, put fire in the stove, rang the bell for the servant to fetch him some medicine, and then sounded her chest, asking her many questions. She told him about the chill she had had that evening, and that she was in the habit of taking her walks at dusk.

"At dusk!" exclaimed he, and that was sufficient to make her hide her face. She must promise him now to be good and not do such things any more; she would have to stay in bed now for several days. She did not relish the mustard-plaster on her chest; but the cough lozenges were a success. He concealed his distress by joking and by petting her--and in a few days she did actually seem as well as he could expect. And now she had become so obedient; she kept in the house quite quietly for a fortnight. Her cough was less frequent; those violent fits of coughing had made her chest so sore; but, on the whole, she felt tolerably well, only very tired and breathless; feeling as if she had no wish to touch the piano.

A path was made for her in the garden, and she went out there for the first time with Kallem in the middle of the day, but went in again almost directly. At first he was frightened, seriously alarmed; but then from her manner he concluded it was only a little capriciousness. However, she felt weaker even than she would allow. The next day she tried together with Sigrid; but after the first few steps she became so breathless that she was obliged to stop and rest; she begged Sigrid not to tell; it would pass over when she "had more practice." The weather was mild, in the middle of the day there were even a few degrees of warmth, and she felt better, could walk further; Kallem was delighted when he saw one day that she had opened the piano.

One evening Sören Pedersen appeared, pale and by himself--two very unusual things. What was the matter? The matter was that Kristen Larssen's ghost haunted the place! Kallem shouted with laughter, but Sören's face never altered; it was quite true that Kristen Larssen's ghost had been seen! The latter years of his life Kristen

Larssen had never played the violin; he gave it to Aune. But now he plays the violin, and in his own house! Did nobody live there? No, the house was shut up; but all the same he played! Several people had heard it; there was not the slightest doubt. It must be some lover of practical jokes who had got in there. Who kept the key?

"A nephew of the widow."

"And who may that be?"

"Aune."

"There we have it!"

"But Aune has himself helped to search the house; and Aune is the most frightened of the lot."

A servant, whose child was ill--Kallem knew her, he was her doctor--had seen Kristen Larssen one night when she was out, vanishing along by the wall of the house! Since then several others had seen it. "No one doubts it," said he. What did the doctor think of this, that the colonel's wife, went into the saddler's shop one day to tell them that she had dreamt she saw Kristen Larssen sitting in a long room, amongst many clever and learned men who were all being taught to spell. She had felt drawn to tell Sören Pedersen this, as it was Kristen Larssen who had led him astray. "And will you believe it, doctor, that very night both Aune and I had dreamt that the colonel's wife came to the shop!"

"Now I will tell you something just as strange, Sören Pedersen. The first day that my wife and I were here in the town, we met Andersen, the mason, Karl Meek, Kristen Larssen, Sigrid, you and your wife, all in the course of a quarter of an hour!"

Sören Pedersen rolled his round eyes about in a stupid sort of fashion; there was nothing so very strange in that.

"Not at all; for the other hundred people we took no notice of. Just as you, Sören Pedersen, never think about the hundreds of people you and Aune dream of without

seeing them come to the shop the following day."

This did not convince Sören Pedersen.

Superstition was afloat. One person followed the other's lead; the whole town soon talked of nothing else, and particularly after the minister was mixed up in the affair. He had lived alone with his mother since the spring. His wife and child had been away, and had only returned quite recently. During all this time his preaching had increased in severity, latterly it had had a passionate ring which foreboded a storm. He announced at the meeting-house that believers were aware that spirits live and work amongst us, and that many poor souls had to wander about after death; these were well-known facts, sent as warnings to each generation.

When Kallem heard about this he decided to act on a thought which he had had for some time, namely, to get Aune in his power. He was very unwilling; having an inventive mind, he generally managed to get out of most scrapes; he could talk so persuasively that he had before this taken Kallem in; but now he was not to escape! His wife agreed to it, so one Sunday morning Kallem hypnotized him, in her presence, down in the office of the hospital--first of all on account of the brandy, but also to clear up this ghost story, which of course no other than this rascal had set afloat! Thus it happened. Now, there was one great difficulty about it: if it were discovered, Aune would be done for; his wife thought of this and interceded for him. There was nothing left but to forbid his proceedings--and then hold their tongues.

This did not prevent Kallem, on his morning rounds, telling Kent, who did not believe in ghosts more than he himself did, that he had discovered where the tale of Kristen Larssen's ghostly reappearance sprang from; the whole was a prearranged affair. So, when Dr. Kent met Josephine one day visiting one of his patients, and knowing that nothing was so dear to her as hearing news of her brother, he repeated Kallem's words. During dinner little Edward, who held forth everlastingly about these ghost stories, told them that Kristen Larssen had again appeared to two boys;

one was a son of Aune, and the other was a son of the lay-preacher! Edward was bursting with excitement. Shortly and decidedly, his mother proved to him that this was nothing but deception; one of the doctors from the town had found out who was at the bottom of this fraud; there was not such a thing as Kristen Larssen's ghost at all.

As soon as the boy had left the dinner-table, the minister reproved Josephine for her tactless conduct.

"How, tactless?"

"Yes, that you could say that to the boy; did you hear how he at once tried to screen himself by saying that I believed in ghosts?" The minister's tone was not arrogant or even reproachful, and she felt that he was right; therefore she did not answer. But it did not rest here, soon after she was in the study.

"I have been thinking of what you said." He was lying on the sofa, smoking, but got up to make room for her; he was glad she came in. She, however, remained standing. "Is the boy to believe a thing because you say it, even if it be untrue?"

"No; but then you could leave it to me to correct the error."

"Are you quite sure that you would do so?"

"Pray, what do you mean by that?"

"Only that you continually teach him things that you yourself cannot possibly believe."

"What are you driving at?" He got very red; for he felt that this was the beginning of an explanation.

"I have often thought of speaking to you of this," she said, "and now the right moment has come. You surely don't believe that the world was created as it is now in six days, six thousand years ago, and that the story of the first man and woman, and the patriarchs is anything but a tradition? Likewise everything about Paradise.

The world and human beings cannot have begun by being perfect. But this is what you teach the children, and of late even Edward."

He now walked up and down the room; she stood in the doorway between the room and the passage. Every time he approached her he gave her a decided, yes, even a look full of power; this was not the look of an evil conscience, she felt that. To show her in what spirit he wished to act, he stopped and said, quietly: "Shan't we sit down, Josephine?"

"No," answered she, "I did not come to stay."

"What you call a tradition," he said, "is the everlasting truth that God created everything and everyone, and that sin is a falling away from Him."

"Why not teach them in this wise, instead of by untrue pictures?"

"Children understand pictures best, Josephine."

"Then tell them that it is only a fairy tale."

"That's of no consequence."

"It is of the greatest consequence that children should not learn everlasting truths in an untrue form--at least, so I think."

He saw that she was working herself up into a state of excitement, and reproved her for it; surely they ought to be able to talk together without that.

"No," she said, "I cannot; for you must know that not only our boy's future, but yours and mine too, depend on this." She went up to the desk to be nearer to him, maybe too she needed support.

But he was not to be put down. "If you yourself, Josephine, were as thoroughly convinced of the eternal truth as you pretend to be, and were you protesting for that truth's sake, then all the rest would be of small importance. And what we wish to put in its stead is very uncertain too; we know that everything did not exactly happen as the revered Book tells us; what we do not know is what the real state of things was.

This only we do know, that our life proceeds from God, and in God alone can we be happy; therefore, let both children and grown-up people accept the first teachings of our fathers, at any rate for the present." There was all the honest strength of conviction in his words, and they were full of power. She was silent for a long time; but all at once something else came over her.

"Do you know that, if it had not been for the total mismanagement of my intelligence and character when I was a child, I too would have become--different from what I am now?"

"Yes," he said, coldly, "I hear that latterly you have come to this conclusion; that faith is the misfortune of your life."

"I never said that!" she exclaimed, very pale, "never meant it either!" But she added, more quietly: "I have never allowed faith in God and salvation through Jesus to be a restraint on my intelligence. Never!"

"Dear me, how fortunate!" said he, but he sighed deeply afterwards.

"Well, if you don't intend to listen to me," she said, "I will just tell you my business straight out. Either you stop telling the boy those fairy tales which are not innocent ones, since they thus ensnare his understanding, or else, Ole, I can no longer consider you as wholly conscientious."

It was not the first time she had spoken harshly; they had had many a long and bitter quarrel. But she had never spoken quite so harshly, never before attacked his faith in that way. She had pleaded her right to have her own opinions, but always with much abuse of his; she had parried his attacks with sharp weapons; but never before had she talked like that or laid down conditions. For long he had been weighed down by the knowledge that she was brooding over something; but this fully armed purpose, sustained by such strength of mind and so much anger--there they stood facing each other; each sounding the depths of the other's will. He too was boiling over with indignant rage, and to put an end at once to anything she might imagine, he said:

"The boy remains with me!"

"With you?" she turned ashy pale. "Have you more right to him than I? Are you his mother?"

"I am his father. The Bible and the law constitute the father owner of the child."

She began to walk up and down, but only between the window and door, as though they were the bars of a cage; her bosom heaved, her breathing was audible, the paleness of her face, her voice, her eyes, all told of the dreadful agitation she was in; she would never have thought him capable of such a thing.

"Are you not ashamed of yourself? Would you keep the boy?"

"Such is my intention, as sure as God orders me to do it. You shall not corrupt our boy!"

"Corrupt him? I? No, that is too much, now I will speak out! From my childhood up you gained power over me in that very same way. Through your unwavering faith you gained power over my mind without my knowing it, for you were so good and devoted. In that way you ruined my nature--that you did--it was meant for other things. You gave me an aim, a choice in life, I knew nothing of it myself. I tell you all this as it was, without blaming you for it. But you must know that you shall not have the same power over my child. Not as long as there is a spark of life in me, in spite of both law and Bible. Now you know that, and you shall see it too!"

Had she but known that for long, very long, he had expected that she would confront him in this way, she would have spared herself such a terrible outburst of passion. He himself was thoroughly master of his feelings.

"Of course, I have led astray your most divine nature, I have known it long! I have done it through that faith which you do not possess. My dear, I was aware of that before you went away!" He spoke slowly and impressively.

"Oh, so you do know it!" she burst forth, passionately; "you do know it! Your faith

has never been mine; it did not suit me. But I have had none other instead; I went about thinking it was a sin that I could not have the same faith as you; I was crushed and overwhelmed, not being able to devote all my strength to something of my own. Therefore I have never been like others. It has all been wrong!"

"What would you have been, you?"

"Let me say the worst--a circus rider," answered she, without as much as moving an eye. He stopped abruptly, he could neither believe his ears nor his eyes.

"Circus rider?" He laughed scornfully. "Indeed, it has been a great loss for the world--and for yourself, Josephine, that you did not become one!"

"I knew you would think so! But if I had had to do with the management of a circus I could have provided bread for hundreds, and healthy amusement for thousands. That is not so little--it is more than most can do. As it is, what have I done? What empty trifles have I been struggling with? And to what have I attained? That I am on the point of despising both yourself and me! What has our life--what has our intercourse come to? Can you even say that you cherish any love for me? Can I say that I am fond of you?"

"No, Josephine, we both know of whom you are fond."

Had he struck her as her brother had done, she could not have been more furious--partly because he had said that (she scarcely knew that it had been in his thoughts), and partly because this man who made that speech owed everything to her brother and to herself, and yet it was he who had come between the brother and sister and separated them.

"Ah, he possesses that which you have not!" she answered, seeking to wound him. "Nevertheless, it is cowardly of you to say such a thing."

"Is it, indeed? Do you not think that I know it is his fault that I have lost you, lost the peace of my home, lost, too, all joy in my calling, and am now threatened with the loss of my child?"

His voice trembled, he began in anger, but it turned to deep grief, and it was the same with her. She felt inclined to sob and cry. But neither of them would give way to such weakness. She stood looking out of the window; he walked up and down the room. There was a long, long pause. Again she was overcome with anger. His step, too, sounded defiant; still there was silence. What he had just said was shameful, certainly.

"Well," she said, without looking round, "now you know the conditions. You can preach about such tales as that of Kristen Larssen's haunting the place, and you have not even sought to inquire into the matter! Just as with your tales of Paradise; you don't believe in them yourself, and yet you can repeat them! Can I have any respect for such conduct? I must say, my brother is much more honest than that! If you come again to my boy with those tales without telling him that they are only fairy tales," and she turned around to him, "then, Ole, there will be an end to our living together. Before God, this is the truth. It will never be any use your trying to take him from me by such means." She moved toward him: "I will never submit to it, Ole!" She left him.

On that very Sunday, at the self-same hour, Kallem returned home to dine; his dinner hour was somewhat later than his brother-in-law's.

He could see Ragni through the kitchen door, with a long apron on which reached up to her chin; she was cutting up vegetables on the kitchen table. He took his things off in the passage and went in and joined her; latterly he had an ever-increasing fear which he had to conceal. Was it the white apron that threw a pale shadow over her, or the steam from Sigrid's cooking? She really was looking fearfully ill. And surely she had been crying! It sent a pang through his heart. She did not look up from her work, but said:

"We are to have a guest for dinner."

"We are?"

"Yes, Otto Meek, Karl's father; he was here this morning, and is now coming to dinner."

"How is Karl getting on?"

"Not well. Oh, here comes Meek!"

His big head under a fur cap could be seen appearing over the prosperous-looking top-coat; he was at the other side of the hedge; now he turned in, and Kallem went to meet him. During the time that Meek practised he had turned his attention particularly to diseases of the chest, which were but too prevalent in these parts of the country, and he took the most lively interest in Kallem's writings and in his work at the hospital; Kallem was glad when he came. As he helped him off with his coat he said that Ragni had told him Karl was not well.

"No, he is not."

"What is the matter with him?"

"Well, that is the reason of my coming here," answered Meek.

"You have spoken to my wife?"

"Yes." They both went in. The room was warm and cosy, the piano stood open. Had she been playing when Meek knocked at the door? If that were the case, then she could not be as ill as she looked; he longed to examine her chest.

Meek was more silent and gloomy than ever that day.

"Well," said Kallem, "did you and my wife come to an agreement about Karl?"

Meek looked up at him, rather surprised. "Do you mean about writing to him?"

"Yes. You know there has been one or other knotty point, as was often the case."

"Yes," answered Meek, and remained sitting there quite silent.

"Do you imagine I know anything of it? Not I, not a scrap."

Meek appeared to be more and more perplexed. "I said to your wife she ought to tell

you. It is very good of her not to do so. But the case is serious." His melancholy eyes looked into Kallem's.

"Serious, do you call it?"

"Yes, I shall be obliged to take him home."

Kallem jumped up from his scat. Meek continued:

"It is altogether useless, his being there."

"But what is wrong? Would you like us to try with him again?" Kallem thought there was a possibility of the youth's having relapsed into his old ways. Meek looked enquiringly at him, almost frightened.

"How do you think your wife really is?" he asked.

Kallem turned red; it struck him like a shot in the midst of his own secret fears. "She caught a nasty cold which she cannot get rid of; for a while I thought, ... I'll tell you what! Can't you sound her chest?" His own doubts had become certainty, his heart beat so that he would not have been capable of examining her himself. Meek continued to gaze at him and Kallem grew more frightened. "Won't you examine her?"

"Yes, of course. Has it not been done recently?"

"Not very recently. No. I don't wish to alarm her. Because if her imagination begins to work then there is danger for her. Besides, there was something else ... However, now I will--" he would have gone to fetch her.

"Did you know her father?" asked Meek, Kallem shuddered.

"Did you?"

"Yes, I was doctor to the fisheries up there."

"Was he--?" Kallem asked breathlessly and unable to finish his sentence. Meek merely nodded, Kallem clasped his head with both hands, hurried to the door, came back again: "You will examine her now, here, at once?"

Kallem led her in tenderly, without giving her time to take off her apron; and carefully brought her up close to the windows. Evidently she had been crying--and those rings under her eyes, her thinness, her colour! She saw his alarm but mistook the cause. Out in the kitchen she had been thinking; now they must be talking about Karl; now Kallem will hear why it is I get no more letters from him. And now that she saw Kallem's agitation she thought, can he be angry because I did not tell him? She could not bear the idea of that, it made her hot and cold by turns.

"Ragni, darling, Dr. Meek would like to sound your chest."

Was that what it was! She was much alarmed, she looked at him with imploring eyes like a stricken deer, begging to be spared. But again he entreated her and began carefully taking off her big apron; submissive as she was she gave herself up to them.

Kallem guessed at once, by the other's manner, by his stopping and then listening again that something terrible was coming. Her startled eyes sought her husband's, and increased his suffering--did she suspect anything herself? Or was she reproaching him for letting anyone but him do this?

Now the doctor's great head was pressed to her back. At the right side, what was it?... a thickening of the tip of the lung? or the tissues? He imagined the worst, and she did the same; he could see that. Could it be that she knew more than she would acknowledge? Concealed something just as he concealed his fears?... Good God, such sorrowfully beseeching eyes were never seen, save only when the fear of death was in them. He was seized with it himself.

"Have you been coughing more than usual lately?" She seemed uncertain as to what she should answer and looked imploringly at Kallem. Her hands were trembling and she tried to hide it; Meek noticed it! "Do you get very tired when you are out walking?" he asked. Again she looked at Kallem in despair, as though she ought to beg his pardon for it. "Do you become breathless quickly?" continued the other.

"Yes."

"Do you at times feel excessively weak, almost as though you were going to faint?" She now looked at Kallem in the greatest alarm. "Maybe you have fainted?"

"Yes."

"Have you?" exclaimed Kallem. "Yes, to-day I did," she said hurriedly, trembling all over.

"Was that after I had spoken to you?"

"Yes, for I wanted a little fresh air, and then--" here her tears choked her utterance.

Dr. Meek smiled a little. "When you cough I presume it hurts you here?" he pointed to the right collarbone. She nodded.

"Have you ever looked at what comes up when you cough?" She made no answer. "Have you never done that?"

"Yes, I have; yesterday evening."

"And how was it?" She was silent, staring at the floor. "Was there blood mixed with it?" She nodded, her tears were falling fast, she did not dare to look up.

Kallem was speechless. Meek asked no more questions. Ragni rearranged her dress, and Meek silently handed her a shawl she had taken off whilst he was examining her. And as she sat helplessly trying to put it on again, Kallem suddenly seemed to think of something he had to fetch from the office. He did not return. She understood the reason why, and for a little while she was doubtful whether she could get up from her chair, and felt as if she would faint again; but the thought of him alone in the office helped her to overcome her weakness, she must go to him. So she begged Dr. Meek to excuse her, got up and went toward the dining-room door and disappeared through it. She too remained away.

Meek waited first a few moments, then a little longer--and still longer. Then he went out to the passage, put on his coat and hat, told the servant in the kitchen that he was

obliged to leave; and left many messages for them.

Sigrid looked for them in the rooms, knocked at the door of the office, could get no answer, she listened and at last opened the door. Kallem was lying on the sofa, Ragni kneeling beside him close up to him. Sigrid announced very quietly that the dinner was ready and that Dr. Meek had gone away. No one answered, no one looked up.

Hitherto Kallem and Ragni had always considered that the day when Ragni sailed for America was the worst they had ever gone through; both in their letters and in speaking of it they had said that they felt as though he must die. But death is different; it is not like anything else. They learned to know that now.

After that day there came a time full of hopeless struggles, speechless despair, and tenderest but joyless love. Ragni had various matters "to arrange," which she quietly set about doing; she had a good deal too to write, and whenever she was able she was thus occupied. She wrote, then scratched out; the whole thing, notwithstanding all her work, proved to be a very short affair. But as long as she was taken up with what she had set herself to get done, she really seemed tolerably well; Kallem was quite surprised.

He himself had lost all courage. He saw the worst before him. As long as he could he shrank from examining her expectoration; ... he knew beforehand that he would find tubercular bacilli there--that enemy, to fight against which he had spent both fortune and life. And now it had conquered him in his own house. But one day he was obliged to do it--and with the expected result. He did not pace up and down the laboratory, neither did he weep nor wring his hands. He only tried whether it were possible to think without her; but it ended always by his thinking of her only. From the hour they first met--all her little ways, the most trifling proofs of her charm and talents, her failings and her silent poetical love, he lived all over again in equal joy and grief; it was all just as dear to him, and just as impossible to part with; countless

incidents full of humour, warmth, fear, sense of beauty, devotion; they all followed him about like so many eyes. Where could he go to, what more could he possibly find to do? She was with him in all his work. Her portrait, taken in the third year of her stay in America, was standing on the edge of the stove; it had been sent to him originally that he might see what effect the progress of her intellectual development had produced in her face and eyes, a joyful confirmation of all he had predicted when he sent her over there. Now, as always, the eyes of the portrait seemed to seek his; during that time of waiting, their smile had cheered and encouraged him; what had it not been for him--that portrait? And now there came pouring in on him all the recollections of their first meeting, the first words, first shy strangeness, the first full and entire recognition, the first embrace.

Only to remind him that now all must cease. All, too, that he had thought of and done in his life together with her; the delight in it, his capabilities, his faith. What in all the world had happened? He was bound to speak to her about it; was there anything she wished to hide from him? Some imprudence which she dare not confess? What could it be? But he must be very careful about it.

Then one day when he came home she was not downstairs. He went up to her and found her lying down. She stretched out her hand--how thin it had become! and fastened her large eyes on him with a faint, half-veiled expression: "I lay down for a little," she whispered; "only for an hour or two." She did not look so very ill; perhaps because she was in bed. He sat down beside the bed and took both her long thin hands between his.

"There is something in all this," he ventured to say, "which has not been confided to me. Once I was entirely on a wrong scent, but latterly, too, it has been more hurried than I could understand, for this reason, that I have not been watchful enough. There is something at the bottom of all this, some great, may be oft-repeated imprudence which I have not been counting on. Darling, tell it me now; I shall have no peace

until you do."

"I will tell you. I have just been thinking about it now. Down-stairs in my writing-table you will find some papers in the first drawer to the left; they are all for you. You must read them when--" she broke off abruptly. "By and by," she added and pressed his hand gently.

"Then I am not to hear about it now?"

"Yes, what you are asking about? Oh, yes. I only had not got so far." She asked him to help her change her position; he did so. "Yes, you shall hear it now. It is for your sake I kept it secret," her eyes filled--"my own"--again a gentle pressure of the hand and a smile. He dried her tears with his handkerchief, letting it slip in under his own spectacles as well. She lay gazing at him but did not speak; had she forgotten or had she changed her mind? He bent down over her:

"Well--?" he asked, "you will not tell me?"

"Oh, yes, the top paper in the drawer, in Karl's handwriting; you may read that at once. But not the others."

"Does Karl's letter contain it?"

She nodded slightly, it was barely visible; then she closed her eyes.

"The key?" he whispered.

"It is in the drawer," she answered, without opening her eyes and let his hand go.

He went down-stairs, opened the drawer, and took out the letter we know of, and sat down to read it properly.

His horror! And his indignation--and his helplessness! Why had he not known of this in time? He paced up and down the room, raging, he sat down again like one paralysed; he made plans and rejected them; he would have gone to every soul in the place and told them they lied. He would force his way into the meeting-house one fine day when it was crowded, climb to the pulpit and accuse them of the most

cowardly, treacherous murder ... then he suddenly remembered that even if Ragni had been perfectly well, that would have been enough to kill her.

He himself lived only to do the best he could for all people; and amongst them all there was not one honest or grateful enough, or even indignant enough to tell him that he ought to defend his own and his wife's good name and the honour of his marriage! What apathy and indifference! What free and open scope for malice and for unjust judging of others in this "Christian" community! Now he understood his sister--she had believed this slander? It was especially to talk to him about this that she had waited for him that evening when he--! And in her indignation at this, which she so fully and firmly believed to be true (for what will not people believe about a free-thinker) she continued to bring "the whale" right down upon them! Everyone believed it, everyone condemned her without hesitation. No one stood up for her, not a soul came to the rescue.

This was what Ragni had had to suffer for being so kind to Karl! It had been all the more unselfish of her because at first it had cost her a struggle, and indeed later on it had often been an effort, too; it was only now that he knew it. In all his life he had never met with any one as good as she was. To think that her tender-hearted disposition should thus be ...! The wretches, the false guardians of salvation, psalm-singing egotists, heartless prayer-makers! He read Karl's letter over again; he felt so heartily sorry for him. Poor, poor fellow. His love for her was quite a natural thing; what good honest man would not adore anyone who had been wronged so unjustly for his sake? The lad's gratitude and admiration would necessarily turn to love. As soon as Karl came home, he would have him over--that he would! And he should stay, too, till she drew her last breath! And he, and none other, would Kallem have to walk with him ... On that terrible day after her coffin! He flung himself on the sofa and cried aloud.

Perchance he had been too much taken up with his own work; he ought to have

associated more with people, and taken her more about with him; then this would never have happened. None who had really felt a lasting impression of her goodness and pure soul would have dared ... though indeed who can tell? Such creatures of habit, blinded by their dogmas, cannot see.

In came Sigrid running, her mistress was very ill, had a terrible fit of coughing. He crossed the rooms, the passage, and was up the stairs in nine or ten bounds; the attack was over when he got there; but she lay bathed in perspiration, so weak and exhausted that she was on the point of fainting. What she had brought up in coughing was of a greenish colour and streaked with blood--well did he know the look of it. He accounted for this, thinking that he had stayed away too long, her excitement had increased, she had grown too warm, had probably thrown off the clothes and then ... She lay there with eyes closed and he tried what he could to make her sleep. After that she never left her room again.

From her he went straight down to his writing-table and despatched a letter to Dr. Meek, telling him what had happened, and without entering into further details, he wrote: "If Karl has come, I suppose we shall soon see him here? Now I know everything!"

He went out to fetch a woman to sit up at night, but went up to her again the moment he got back; she seemed to be easier and was asleep, and when at last she did awake, her eyes fell first on him. He waited on her, giving her something to drink, and all the questions he so plainly read in her eyes, he answered by kissing her poor thin hand, for his lips quivered and his glasses were bedewed with tears.

But they talked about other things--how that her sister would not be able to come, and that he had himself been to fetch Sissel Aune to help to nurse Ragni; she was the best person he knew of for that sort of thing, and then she was truly devoted to them. Ragni nodded her consent. They never wearied of gazing at each other, as those do who cannot be satisfied. And they both thought of that which they now both

knew--the cause of her lying there ill. "Poor Karl!" whispered she.

He answered: "Poor Karl!"

He felt obliged to get up, pretended he had forgotten something down-stairs; he could always make an excuse.

Had he but been able to talk to her! But he dared not, and he could not find time to be alone. He attended to all his hospital work, and received those of his patients who came to him; but he gave up everything else so as to sit with her!

How terrible it seemed to him that he should have given both his work and his fortune to these people, and they repaid him by murdering his life's joy! What kind of measure did people mete with, if they could not understand merely by looking at her, that she was the purest, the most refined little person amongst them all--to him it was inexplicable; their blindness seemed so revolting. All those he knew were, for the most part, plain middle-class people, comfortable and fond of their homes in daily life, none of them particularly bright, of course; they were all church-going people, a few attended the meeting house too, Pastor Tuft's body-guard. Among the latter he had come across several good, prudent sort of people. And yet so pitiless in their judgment, so cruelly loving--all of them murderers without stain or blemish.

And there was none he could go to and take by the throat, exclaim: "You have done this; you are answerable to me for this!" Meek and lovable accomplices! There was one who stood apart from the others--Josephine. Josephine had not invented this; that was not her way. But she would believe what was invented when it concerned anyone she disliked. With icy-cold silence she would allow other people to keep their false, wicked belief in the slander, or she would let it go on increasing. How indignant he felt in his heart toward her! Although she was certainly not the originator of the report--he had to repeat that constantly, she would hardly sully her lips with such slander, she was too grand for that--still Josephine was the most to blame for this murder! He was convinced that however little of a Christian she was

in herself, her love of Christian dogmas had been offended by the little creature's want of faith, and by such a very faulty person daring to come and reject their faith. Thence her excessive "spirit of justice" which killed with so sure and well-meaning a blow.

But there was this much likeness between them, that he, too, was filled with the greatest desire of vengeance. He, too, called it "justice;" and he had no idea that he was lying. When he was with Ragni he never had those feelings; her mere presence always did him good. He became deeply agitated if he did feel like that when with her, would well-nigh crush her hand, stroke her forehead and gazing into her eyes, watch her and wait on her till he felt he must go; otherwise he would have knelt down beside her and given way completely.

Good, helpful Sissel Aune was sitting there now, her dark eyes watching over her with prudent calmness, or turning sometimes, full of sympathy, to him. She represented all those whom he had helped and who would have helped him had they been allowed. Aase or Sören Pedersen came creeping to the kitchen every morning to hear how she was, and as the news spread, there came others, all quietly sympathetic. Poor Sigrid could not go up much to her mistress on account of her crying. But would go all the same when such things as this happened--for instance when Fru Baier the colonel's wife brought a lovely flower in a pot which she had cherished and nurtured through the winter, and which she carried under her cloak to protect from the severe cold; it was to be taken up to Fru Kallem and put where she could see it. A servant girl, whose child Kallem had attended in a severe illness (the same girl who had seen Kristen Larssen's ghost) had also a flower in a pot, a single one, and when she heard of Fru Baier's gift she brought hers, too. The pot it was in was very common, but what did that matter? Without such tokens of sympathy Kallem could never have borne up.

One day when he had been over to the hospital where there was something going on

he came back home so deep in thought that he did not notice there were strange travelling wraps hanging in the passage. He opened the door into the room before taking off his own things; and there close by the windows next the veranda stood Otto and Karl Meek. Karl was the first to turn round; and he came and threw himself in Kallem's arms. He looked ill, and his manner was restless and confused. His long hair was in disorder, his oval face, large in itself, seemed to have grown larger; his eyes had a burning, languishing look in them, the like of which Kallem had never seen. They never left his own eyes. They besought his indulgence; they told a tale of bitter sorrow, and followed him about wherever he went. Karl could not control his feelings, and, as Kallem was obliged to talk to his father, Karl began looking about him, went up to the piano, stroked the tables with his hands, fingered the flowers and turned over the music--then went out to the dining-room, into the office, stayed there a little by himself, and from there out to the kitchen to Sigrid, and there he stayed. Kallem looked round after him repeatedly; Dr. Meek noticed it, and said:

"All we Meeks have strong feelings. We have tried to tame them; but Karl cannot control his; they are only pent in to burst forth with greater violence."

When Karl came back, he had been crying bitterly; Kallem did not wish him to go up to Ragni; at all events he must wait until he was calmer. Karl himself said he would be calm the moment he went up to her; he implored to be allowed to see her; but to no avail. He did not see her the whole of that day, and, as the evening was always her worst time, she was never even told that he was there.

The next morning, when she had been tidied for the day, Kallem let her know that Dr. Otto Meek had come to town, and had called yesterday to ask after her.

"And Karl too?" she asked.

"Yes, Karl was with him." She lay quiet for a little without saying anything.

"I ought to be able to hear if anyone were to play down-stairs."

"Yes, if we open the room door; but would it be wise?" The passage was warm and

shut in by doors, the up-stairs rooms were always aired by means of it; so in that respect there was nothing to be afraid of. "But you think you can bear the music?"

"Yes, I long for music," she answered.

Sissel Aune looked at the doctor; she evidently thought it was not wise. "May Karl not come up to see you?"

Ragni lay folding the corner of the sheet with the one hand, in the other she held her handkerchief; she did not answer; clearly she had no wish to see him.

"But you will see Dr. Meek?"

"Must I?"

Kallem wished him to see her. Dr. Meek came later in the day and Kallem told him all. Karl begged most humbly to be allowed to stand in the doorway behind the others. He promised not to say a word, or make a movement, and to go away directly. Kallem felt so sorry for him that he could not deny his request. He went in first and announced Dr. Meek, who then followed him in. Dr. Meek's broad back quite hid Karl, who placed himself in the door. Ragni lay with her face turned from the light, therefore toward the door. She did not see Karl, but he caught a glimpse of her thin, hollow-cheeked face, of her feverish cheeks and dry lips; her eyes in their glistening brightness, seemed pleading for help. The consuming thirst that tortured her day and night made Sissel come forward from the other side and stand half in front of her, propping her up as she gave her something to drink.

Meek asked her a few questions, but she answered him absently and glanced fearfully and timidly from side to side; did she guess that Karl was there? Afterwards she moved a little and Sissel slipped back to her place; then she might have seen Karl, but he was gone.

Later on they found him sitting crouching in the down-stairs room, in the greatest despair, but he asked if he might stay there and have his former room again;--even if he were not allowed to see her again, he could not keep away. Kallem did not dare

to refuse him; and his father, too, seemed to wish it. There was something about him that made them both feel anxious.

The next morning Karl played the piano for her; the door down-stairs was open and her door was ajar; the music sounded muffled, but very sweet. He had improved much in his playing; she did not know the piece he played, but it pleased her; she sent a greeting down to him, and that she was very grateful to him for it. By-and-by he played something else, and the following morning he did the same. The result was that she sent for him to come up to her. Karl promised to be quiet, oh so very quiet, and only to stay there a moment. In the passage he already began to walk on tip-toe and glided in, mastering his emotion. But as soon as he was under the influence of her eyes, as in olden days, he could feel that she was afraid of him and would rather he went away. This grieved him much; he stood there, the embodiment of an earnest entreaty to be allowed to stay. She, too, perceived the change in him; Kallem took her hand and she grew calmer. The longer he stood there, the more she felt pity for him. He had suffered, he was a good lad; she tried to smile at him, even stretched out her poor wasted hand. Karl looked at Kallem, but did not take her hand, nor did he advance a single step; but his agitation increased, and, as though she would quiet it, she whispered: "Good Karl!" He went away.

He was very quiet and silent after this visit, just as though he were brooding over some plan or purpose. He talked still less to Kallem, and not at all to anyone else. Every morning he was allowed to be up-stairs for a little while; he played for her down-stairs, but otherwise went about alone the whole day.

As he was playing one morning, she could tell by the first few chords that it was something of his own. Once or twice before she had heard some scraps of his own composition; now he had adopted a different method, but the originality of his talent suffered by it. This new piece was a beginning to something greater, a wild introduction full of stormy passions! Heavens! thought she, it must be meant for

himself. After the crashing storm there came a calm, and a melody arose, simple and touching; can that be meant for me? Then there came shrieks and yells breaking in upon this peaceful little melody; a few bars of melody and several bars of lamentation and crying, the first air rushing and mingling with the other, all done in a natural sort of way--almost too natural, for it became irresistibly comical. She had to be careful not to laugh, for she could not stand that sort of thing. She looked at Sissel Aune to ask her to hurry down and put an end to it; but Sissel Aune's clever face expressed so much astonishment on hearing these most natural shrieks. Dear, dear, can people scream like that in music too? The last hidden remains of Ragni's old merry humour broke out in a few peals of laughter, a few more, and then the cough! Again the cough, and again and again, a worse fit than she had ever had before.

Through his playing, Karl heard the bell rung down to the kitchen; he heard Sigrid rush up-stairs and come tearing down again calling for the doctor. Karl knew that he had just gone across to the hospital, and ran off himself, without hat or coat; he could not find him at once, so they did not get back before the fit was over. There was a greater quantity of blood than usual. Kallem was much alarmed, Karl could see, for he had gone up-stairs after him almost unconsciously. He retired, though, immediately.

Later in the morning her room was aired, but Kallem stayed there all the time; Karl passed by outside, and heard him talking, so he ventured to peep in. Ragni lay there much exhausted, but Kallem had just asked her if she did not feel any better? She caught a glimpse of Karl, with his great, big, frightened face. She recollected how she had laughed at him, and she had heard from Kallem that in his fright he had run to fetch him without either coat or hat. She made a sign to Kallem that Karl was to come in. She smiled at him, even raised her hand a little, just a very little; was it to thank him? He ventured to draw nearer, he would take her hand to-day. He would do more, he would bend down over it; there came a look into his eyes. Kallem, who

was standing at her right, saw it; saw, too, that it was the hand she was holding the handkerchief in that he would have bent over and perhaps kissed; he hastened to say:

"Do not do that, Karl."

Karl drew himself up again and looked at them both; but again there came that strange look in his eyes, and in an instant he seized both hand and handkerchief and kissed them both. Before anything could be said, he stood upright again as though he would challenge them all, or had done some mighty deed of valour. Ragni lay there with eyes devoid of hope or understanding; she could not take in his warlike attitude, his high-flown purpose, but only felt the more convinced of his terrible instability. Karl had vanished.

If his wish were to die with her, it was a mistaken calculation, which, under other circumstances, would have been amusing, since she had just been tidied and arranged after her attack and had had a fresh handkerchief given her. But Kallem thought only that what is ordered for the best only makes mad folk still madder--she had been much startled.

As soon as he could, he went in search of Karl. He found him with his overcoat on, hurrying out. But Kallem called out:

"Where are you going to?"

Karl did not answer; he was excited and only thought of getting away, Kallem drew him into the room, placed himself in front of him and looked steadily at him, then put his arm round his neck. Upon this, Karl burst into tears. He complained that he was altogether impossible; nobody ever wanted him and he was fit for nothing. For long Kallem could not get in a word; the other would not let himself be comforted; his misery and worthlessness were too great, and he was utterly without talent. He had that morning been playing his latest composition, originated like none other, out of his own life; the most true that he could produce, and it had seemed to him to be comical, terribly comical! Ah ha! thought Kallem, is it that; that is the matter?

And it was that. He could feel in her presence how she judged him!

Kallem saw his mistake in having let him come to them at all; he thought with horror of all Ragni must formerly have gone through with him. He had considerable difficulty himself in keeping him in order just now.

One day he said to her--she had just been asking after Karl--"You evidently have had more trouble with him than I had the slightest idea of." She closed her eyes, then opened them again smiling.

Karl did not come to see her any more, did not even ask to be allowed to do so. He could not play during all this self-torture; Kallem had almost to threaten him before he could succeed in hearing any of his own little pieces. At last he agreed, but with closed doors; Ragni, however, heard them and thought them very pretty; so did Kallem. Karl became quite happy again at this; some of his self-assurance returned, and by degrees he became more agreeable.

When once Kallem had got everything quiet and in order, his turn came. He fought manfully, but not always with success, and Karl felt there were others besides himself who suffered, and others to be thought of too. A total change came over him. He now only lived for Kallem, full of care and thought for him. There was one mode of comforting him that never failed; this he often had recourse to. It was to speak of Ragni and give an impressive description of her. He could paint beautiful pictures of all the peculiarities of her nature and person; could artistically depict some action or word of hers with such adoring fervour, that it was balm to Kallem's feelings; he stood in need of the warming rays of sympathy, for he was sinking with despair at her increasing weakness. She could not even keep her head on the pillow; it fell either to one side or the other, her eyes had an ethereal look, that seemed to spiritualize everything she gazed at; her thin, silent lips were half open on account of the difficulty in her breathing; as she lay there in that white room, between the white sheets and in that white gown, she was like some gasping fledgling in a deserted,

downy nest. Often when Kallem left the room, unable to restrain his grief, or from over-fatigue, it was Karl who persuaded him to rest, or found the right word to comfort, or sing endless praises of her.

She could not talk much, indeed she felt no inclination to do so; but, when she did speak, she showed that she did not for a moment mistake her state--as consumptive people generally do. One day she made a sign to Kallem to bend down closer to her. "Kristen Larssen," she whispered, "there in that corner." She smiled and added: "I am not afraid of him any more now." Another time she sent for Kallem only to say. "You must not feel anger toward anyone--for my sake." She mentioned no name. Kallem pressed her hand; her eyes flashed on him in rapturous joy. Sometimes she tried to smile, a thing no longer in her power. If she remarked his tears, she would beckon to him, and put her fingers through his hair. Once while so doing he thanked her for everything, from their first meeting till this moment--she tried to pull his hair; he was not to say those kind of things.

Since then they scarcely spoke. They used the language of the eyes, with pressure of the hands. They were one in their grief, and had no thought left unuttered. The gratitude they felt toward each other, the horror of an approaching separation, could not be expressed in words. The hour was at hand.

One evening they heard Sissel ring, and ring and ring. Sigrid rushed up, after her Kallem and Karl; the latter remained outside! He could hear that it was a fit of coughing, a terrible one again. He could not conceive that she still had so much strength; each separate cough seemed to stab his breast; it cut right through him and crushed him; the cold sweat broke out on him when he heard her groans of pain; he could not bear to listen, yet he dared not go away. Probably this was her last hour. He heard how Sigrid was weeping, and heard her say: "Oh mistress! mistress!"--and soon after: "She is dying!" He opened the door. The first thing he saw was blood, and he sank to the ground fainting.

When he came to himself, he was lying on his bed; Sigrid was sitting beside him crying. This was the first thing he remarked; then suddenly he remembered everything and asked: "Is she dead?"

"The doctor thinks it will soon be over."

Later on they were both allowed to go in. There she lay in her bed as if asleep, white as the sheets she lay on. Kallem was holding her hand; as they entered they could not see his face, only the heaving of his shoulders, and hear his groans. Sissel stood at the other side. How wonderful it was to see the different degrees of grief. Although her strong, open features were full of sympathy, still they belonged to an outsider; she seemed removed miles from Kallem's silent despair.

"Is she dead?" whispered Sigrid. Sissel shook her head. And Ragni heard the question; she looked up. She exerted her last strength to please them; she tried--one can't say to smile, for that was beyond her power now; no, she wished to send them some last message. It lighted on Sigrid and Karl; but she at once transferred it to Kallem. A moment after she was dead.

The others left the room; Kallem still sat on. When he went down, he found no one. Karl had gone to his room, Sissel and Sigrid were sitting together in the latter's room. The kitchen was empty; rooms empty, office empty. He had promised to read something she had written, yes, there it lay under Karl's letter, and on it was written: "By and by." But he could not read it now, scarcely, indeed, as long as she still lay in the house. He went up to her book-shelf and gazed at it--the image of her own self. How often had he done this before and smiled at the titles of the books. His eyes now fell on "Vildanden" by Henrik Ibsen. He was so tall, that, looking at it from above, it seemed to him there was a gap between the last leaves, so he took out the book. Just fancy, she had cut out the leaves where Hedvig's sad story is about to close, where she shoots herself, and all that follows after that. Cut it right out; it ought never to have happened.

Nothing could have affected him more. He threw himself down on the sofa, and his sobs were like those of an ill-used child. Of course she was too refined and too timid; the world we have to battle in is still too rough; it must improve before such as she can live in it. She tried to take from it all she did not like; but it was she who was taken.

XI.

Some days before the Sunday on which the struggle between Ole and Josephine about little Edward's education had taken place, he had had a cough. That evening he was not quite well, so was kept indoors.

In a few days he was out again and seemed very bright; but one evening he was feverish and cross, with a dry cough, and so was kept in on the following days. Accustomed as he was to be in the open air, he grew fretful and lost his appetite; Josephine had many a fight with him and at last had to be severe. Then he began whimpering and wanted to go to his grandmother; that was not allowed. But when his grandmother came to see him, he was cross and peevish and went off to his father. But he came back again crying; he had not been allowed to pull out the books from the lower shelves to build a house with.

So he was put to bed feverish and cross; complained that when he coughed it hurt him again in the right side of his chest; during the night he was in a high fever, raving about Kristen Larssen; that he was chasing all the boys and was going to carry them off to hell in a big bag.

Josephine doctored him with compresses of turpentine, etc.; but in the morning, when his father came up to see him, she begged that the doctor might be sent for.

Kent was their family doctor; he was not able to come before the evening, and found that the boy had pleurisy in the right side. All that Josephine had done was quite correct; he himself gave some orders respecting the necessary diet, and prescribed a

mixture to be taken every other hour, also that if the fever increased so that his temperature rose higher than 39 degrees Centigrade, he was to be sent for.

The next few days the boy seemed better, had a little appetite, coughed less; his temperature in the evening was never higher than 38 degrees. God be praised!

Though the danger had only been very slight, both Tuft and Josephine felt it like a gentle pressure on the shoulder by an invisible hand! In this way they were forced to draw nearer to each other, and they sought opportunities of talking together--certainly it was only about the child's state; but something both in voice and manner seemed pleading for pardon.

His cough and the pain in the side decreased, and by degrees the boy grew visibly better; but his appetite was not good; he still had a little fever every day, and he did not gain strength. They bought him some new toys which he was delighted with the first day; but the next day he was tired of them; he listened to the fairy tales which his father and mother told him by turns, without asking a single question; he took no notice of his grandmother's visits. Sometimes he would grow quite hot, and directly after felt quite cold. Kent was specially anxious because the child's temperature rose every evening; he began to give him quinine, then tried a blister! Josephine would not leave his bedside and could not bear to hear of anyone taking her place; neither did the child like anyone else to come near him.

However there was an improvement, and the minister said one evening, when they were sitting together after having tried the child's temperature: "We shall escape with a good fright, Josephine." She looked up at him; he put out his hand; she placed hers in it, but seemed half ashamed and took it away again.

Dr. Kent had told them that Fru Kallem was very ill; she could no longer leave her bedroom. Later on they heard from others that she suffered from decline; they each separately asked Dr. Kent, who told them that it was galloping consumption.

The minister did not mention it to Josephine; but he said to Kent that this would

doubtless be a blessing for his brother-in-law; possibly he would now be less burdened and able to work his way higher up.

Josephine took it in quite a different way; he could see it by her increased reserve; only very rarely would she say a word or two to him.

Some time afterwards, as she was lying on her bed one afternoon and wondering how it would affect her brother if Ragni were to die--suddenly she saw him. At first she thought nothing of it; but it grew so excessively distinct. She saw him stretched at full length on a sofa in his office; she could see the whole room, curtains, bookshelves, books, desk, two tables, a large armchair, several half-opened books, and sheets of paper covered with writing lying side by side.... She saw each sheet, each little detail, and he himself in a brown suit of clothes which she did not know. But she had never been in the office since it was furnished, and had never seen that furniture, nor the curtains and carpet; but she had no doubt whatever that it was exactly as she saw it. At any other time this would have produced a strange impression; but now it was all swallowed up in the fact of her seeing him; for he was so worn and wasted by grief! The closer she looked at him, the worse it became. In such despair did he seem to be, that never before in her life, not even when their father died, had anything so moved her. She saw him tossing about sobbing bitterly; she saw him holding his hands clasped before him. At last she saw nothing but him, the agony of his eyes from under the busy brows and spectacles, and all around him a great waste.

She awoke bathed in cold perspiration and so exhausted that she could hardly lift a finger. From that time she seemed weighed down by a vague fear: it deprived her of sleep. Had this to do with her brother, or her boy? Little Edward lay there beside her, with laboured breathing and a cough that seemed to come from a distance. His high forehead seemed empty, his eye restless; his hands were no longer a small boy's rough little fists, they were ethereal. At times she would hasten up to him, just to be

sure he was there. Ah me! it had come to that; but merciful heavens--surely she was not going to lose him? She seemed to recognize her brother's suffering in this of her own, and each time felt as though they were drawn together in it. Her boy's fate grew to be one with Ragni's. In wakeful nights and during anxious days, both these destinies became so entangled and interwoven that to her mind they seemed to depend on one decision.

Until now her religion had chiefly been a desire for freedom and an unflinching love of truth. In her great anxiety this became fatalism, unbending, mystical fate. Everything startled her; she was always seeing signs and warnings. It seemed as though the boy could only lie on the side that was affected, otherwise it pained him so that he cried out ... and each time she helped him, she could not make this out at all. She propped him up with air-cushions; he replied by heartrending entreaties to be left in peace. She no longer knew what was right or wrong. He would not even let her come near his legs; he always wanted to have his knees bent and the one knee in a certain position over the other, ... and she had to yield to these inexplicable fancies and let herself be set aside as superfluous and troublesome. Was this to show her that she must accustom herself to the idea that she was always in the way?

In the end this would quite wear her out. Her fright from the last time she had moved him till the next time she would have to do it, would have been more than enough. But all the fancies and ideas she took into her head nearly drove her mad; she spoke to no one about it. This new phase with the legs seemed to her so hopelessly mystical in its unreasonableness, that it made her afraid of the boy; he was no longer her boy. Just by chance later on she discovered a good deal of swelling round the ankles. She had always heard that this was the beginning of the end; she could scarcely drag herself down the stairs to the study, where the minister sat in a cloud of smoke. He saw her enter pale and terrified in her white night-dress.

"My dear, what is the matter?" He listened to her, went up with her, and looked at

the swelling, fell on his knees by the bedside, burying his face in his hands; he was praying. Across his father's head she heard the short hurried breathing of the little fellow, saw the shining yet indifferent look he turned on him. She, too, would have prayed; but at that moment the boy pushed his father away with his hand; he could not bear the smell of tobacco. In that way he pushed her away from a possible prayer.

Dr. Kent's kind smile, his quiet, comforting assurance that the illness was the same as when he first had discovered the inflammation, that no worse symptom had set in, and that the swelling probably came from the strained position of the knees, relieved them so that Josephine cried for joy. He examined various matters, thereby confirming what he had already said.

That night Josephine slept better than she had done for long, but still she felt weaker than ever before.

Some time passed; one evening the minister and Dr. Kent came up-stairs; there was a certain solemnity about them. Josephine lay dressed on the bed, raised herself so as to get up, but both Kent and the minister begged her to lie down again. Dr. Kent told her that Fru Kallem had died the day before. Both the men looked at Josephine; she closed her eyes. For a while there was complete silence. But seeing repeated twitchings in her face, Tuft hastened to say:

"Under these circumstances, Josephine, it can only be for Edward's good. Of course he will feel it deeply now, but he will get over it. It will but benefit him." Josephine turned away her head. Her eyes remained closed; then the tears gushed forth.

He felt at that moment that he had said something studied; indeed, that he had been guilty of brutality. He had changed much during their boy's illness and that time of mutual anxiety. These words from former days--coming as they did just then in her smarting grief; uttered by the bed of their own sick child--became his silent companions, full of independent life: "they were messages from God."

Until he let fall those words, Josephine had always prayed silently whenever her husband prayed; since then she could do it no longer. She felt as she did in the beginning of their married life, when he had always expected her to join in all his overweening wishes and desires. In those days he had noticed nothing, but now he felt it at once. But just on that account, he felt he must have support, must have it chiefly in prayers for his sick child. So he turned to his friends at the meeting-house; he was sure of them. The painful events of those days; his fear for his boy's life; his joyless, wounded love, all collected into one violent outburst: he begged them to pray with him, he besought God's mercy. Could he but be found worthy of higher communion with God, then the trial would not be too hard.

He was radiant with the strength of his faith, as he went home and told about it. There were few like him when he was thus powerfully moved; but it happened so seldom.

Josephine's state of health became alarming. The want of fresh air and regular sleep week after week, the loss of appetite and the constant anxiety, all began to tell upon this strong and healthy nature. Tuft spoke to Kent about it secretly; but there was nothing to be done as long as she would do nothing herself.

Whilst he was carefully watching her every movement, he was obliged one day, against his will, to tell her that Ragni was not to be buried there, but at the nearest country church. Thereupon his brother-in-law made known his indignation and loathing in the strongest possible way. Undoubtedly it was aimed at the community at large, but mostly at them.

Tuft never knew what Josephine felt about it; it hurt him deeply. Once only she showed how impatient she had become. He had bent down over the boy, but came rather too near; Edward began to whimper and push him away with his hand.

"Why can't you give up smoking?" she said, bitterly.

He turned to her and answered, meekly: "I will give it up." When he got up

afterwards he added, sorrowfully: "He is not well to-day."

"No," she answered, quietly; his way of taking it made her feel ashamed.

The doctor was sent for; he was used to these sudden messages, so he took it quietly, and possessed that most excellent faculty of communicating his calm to others. The parents thought at first that the child ate with a better appetite, and took more notice of his grandmother. She came four times a day, and the way in which she was received was always their barometer.

The old grandmother had been up to the hospital and had seen Kallem and Karl Meek drive away from there with Ragni's body. The coffin was white, and was on a sledge draped with black; Sigrid sat in front, beside the coachman; Kallem and Karl Meek followed after in a sledge with a seat for two. That was the whole procession.

This account of Ragni's last journey came unawares on them. And that Karl Meek was there, and alone! Did that mean that Kallem did not suspect him? Or, which was more likely, that he had forgiven him? Wishing perhaps to gloss it over and thus do her a last service? Ah, if one could be as good as that!

The following night Josephine went down-stairs to her husband who was asleep. Her hair was let down; she looked like one bewitched, or walking in her sleep, with her great hollow-eyed face surrounded by the long black hair, with eyes staring fixedly over the lamp she held in her hand. He sat up and would have got out of bed. She stayed him with her hand, and said, in a monotonous voice:

"I wish to speak to you, Ole; I cannot sleep. My brother's wife wants to take away our boy."

He felt all the blood rush to his heart.

"What do you say?" he whispered.

"We have been too hard, we two. Now we shall have to pay for it; and she will not be satisfied with less."

"Dear Josephine, you are not yourself. Let us fetch help!" He started up.

"Yes, I am going to get help. All who can pray must come now! Do you hear, Ole?"

"But, dearest"

"Or do you not think that you all are stronger than she is; do you not think so? The other day you came home so happy from the prayer-meeting--oh, you know them, make them come, do make them come, Ole, do you hear?" She began sobbing and crying: "It is but a Christian's duty to bring help here. They cannot look on and see her take him from us!"

Her voice died away in a long wailing sound. He was sitting on the edge of the bed, and had put on his under-garments, but stopped now with his trousers in his hand.

"My dear, my dear, only believe that it is God who has the power and none other. Josephine, you are ill!"

He was much distressed, and hastened to get on his clothes.

"Will you really go and fetch them?" she asked, much pleased, and put down the lamp. "Thank you, I knew you would. I assure you solemnly, Ole, that it is urgent!"

He did make haste, but said:

"You know, Josephine, we must be careful when we pray for non-spiritual things."

This made her uneasy; she stretched out her hands to him. Everything she had on was loose and open, the sleeves slipped from her shoulders--she had grown so fearfully thin--a great fear came over him. Her wild countenance, delirious words, emaciated form....

"God bless you, Josephine, do not exert yourself too much in prayer, you might break down completely, you have grown so weak!"

"Do you not believe, then, Ole?" flashed from her like lightning.

"Yes, yes! But suppose God's will be not our will, dear child?" There arose in him the painful recollection of Andersen's death-bed scene. "You would pray for a

miracle!"

"Yes, yes! of course! Certainly! What else should we pray for?"

"We pray to be granted communion with God, Josephine; at all events that is what I do. For then all is well, my soul is strengthened, and often I am in such sore need of it."

"It is written, 'Soften the heart of the Lord.' Is that not right? Soften the heart of God? Speak, Ole. Soften the heart of God? Answer me!"

He was kneeling down in front of the stove with a piece of firewood in one hand and a knife in the other, he would have lighted the fire; she was so thinly clad; but he stopped now and looked up at her sorrowfully. "I dare not pray for a miracle, Josephine; I am not worth." As he was saying this his agitation increased, and he was so overcome that he had to put down what he had in his hands and cover his face. But when he looked up again he started to his feet; if she had had her arms full of the most costly china and had let it fall so that it was shivered to a thousand pieces ... she could not possibly have looked different, more paralysed, more horror-struck. Her hands were outstretched as though over what she had let fall, her eyes were fastened on him, her senses gone; it seemed as though the next instant she must fall. Not so however; for when he seized hold of her, she woke up, collected her thoughts and without further warning said quickly:

"Then we must send for my brother! He only can make her leave our boy alone." The words proceeding from that strange train of thought were like a suggestion to him. A thousand times he had thought the same, Colonel Baier's case had called forth the desire, and many had advised him to it; but until now he had been ashamed.

A few minutes later, he was on his way to Dr. Kent; who must be consulted first.

It was a sharp, clear night. By day the roads were in a state of thaw, but frozen again at night, so he had to be careful; it was not easy, pursued as he was by his thoughts. What became of the Bible's dogmas of the creation, the deluge, and all the rest--what

was it all worth, when death was at the door? What then was number one, what number twenty?

None would wake up at Kent's house; he rang and rang without hearing any sound himself; the bell must have been removed. Then he began to knock, it sounded hollow and hard, and to him it seemed as though death were knocking; it was so, too. At last a servant appeared rather grumbling, but as it was the minister she went to rouse the doctor. Patient Dr. Kent came down, brought him into his room and listened to him. He would with pleasure go to Kallem; had he thought they would have allowed it, he would have done it long since.

When Tuft got back Josephine was up-stairs with the child; she misunderstood him, she thought her brother was coming at once, and as he had not appeared by seven o'clock, by eight, by nine, she was afraid he would not come and became much agitated; her husband was obliged to go again to fetch her brother and the doctor. Kent was not to be found at once; but sent to say that Kallem and he would come at eleven o'clock precisely. They came, too, at that hour; but the minister had been called away, so there was no one to receive them, Kallem had not put his foot inside their door since the day he had arrived in the town. Since the preceding night Josephine had not had her brother out of her thoughts, which is always the case when one longs for anyone; but when at last Kent and he came up the thickly-carpeted stairs she was not thinking of him; she stood bending over the boy giving him a drink; when their knock came at the door she started up and could not utter a sound. The door opened nevertheless. Kent let Kallem go in first.

He was met by a slight scream. She nearly dropped what she was holding; for what did he look like! It was death himself who came, bony and mowing all around with sharp scythe. It was not to help her, but to take the boy from her; she felt it directly.

Shortly and mercilessly he looked at her, without a spark of compassion, although she too was worn with grief. As he advanced further in he looked at the boy, and

from that moment she ceased to exist for him, she slipped on one side. Kent went up and greeted her kindly, then went back to Kallem. And now the usual thing happened--the same that had happened to Kallem himself when he was together with Dr. Meek--namely, Dr. Kent accepted all Kallem's impressions, the child's appearance seemed new to him and frightened him considerably. All that he had formerly put away from him, showed itself of its own accord--"Empyème?" he whispered in French to Kallem who did not answer, but drew nearer, felt the boy's faint, weak pulse, tapped him lightly here and there, listened to the quick short breathing, looked at the temperature list and at what he had last coughed up. Then followed a short consultation between the doctors; Josephine heard every scrap of it, although she stood a little way from them, on the other side of the bed--the child's bed now stood where his father's used to stand; but she did not understand the technical terms, therefore could not seize the meaning. She felt that some evil was hanging over her; her hands were pressed together on her bosom while her eyes wandered from one to the other. At last Kent approached a few steps; he wished to ask if they might be allowed to insert the point of a syringe, fine as a needle, in the cavity of the chest.

"Is it an operation?" she whispered as she sought support.

"We shall be able to tell then," he answered, equally softly. She sank down on a chair. Her brother did not wait for her answer, but pulled out his instrument case and took out of it something shiny, long and thin, bending down with it over the boy. She saw nothing more; nor could she think of anything either--she only tried not to give way; she heard the boy whimper and call repeatedly "Mother" in a frightened voice; she had not the strength to rise up, dared not move. She heard Kent say: "Now it is over, my boy;" but could not see what was over.

Little Edward whimpered and cried, and insisted on having his mother up to his bed. So she tried once or twice, but it was quite impossible; her brother acted like a

weight on her, although he never even looked her way.

The door opened and shut; he had gone, and she breathed more freely. Kent went up to her at once, kind and sympathetic.

"There must be an operation," he whispered.

"What for?" She knew it would be of no use; she had seen it written in her brother's face.

"Because everything must be tried," answered Kent.

With the most miserable little voice, the boy begged his mother to come to him.

"I am coming." She knelt down beside him and began to cry.

"They hurt me," the boy said, complaining.

Ah, if she could have answered: "It was to make you well that you may get out again." But even Kent dared not say that. She struggled to find courage to forbid the operation, but she dared not, she was afraid of her brother. Kent stood there waiting; she became conscious of that at last, and looked despairingly at him. He stooped down to her.

"Your brother generally sends some of the hospital people to disinfect and arrange everything," he said, gently.

"Is it to be to-day?" whispered she, weeping bitterly.

"No; but the cleaning and airing must be begun today. The adjoining rooms must be used, too." She had laid her head down again beside the boy, she made no answer; then she heard him go.

When the minister came home he rushed up at once to the sick room and was not a little surprised to find his mother there and--Sissel Aune! The latter was keeping watch, the boy was cross, and did not want anyone near him but his mother; not even his father, for he could still smell tobacco about him, although he had given up smoking. Tuft found Josephine lying on his sofa in the study, overcome with

despair, and talking quite incoherently; "Doomed to death!" she would answer to nearly all his questions.

One of the deaconesses came over in the afternoon and assumed the management of affairs; she brought strange servants with her; their home seemed broken up, and the scouring and cleaning sounded like the planing of a coffin. Their own servants all sorrowful, poor old grandmother in tears; and when they heard the noise caused by moving the boy's bed into another room, they sat trembling hand in hand.

Fancy, now, if anyone were to say: "It is a good thing for the parents, that their boy is dying. Of course they can't think so now, but they will come to see it in that light;" fancy if anyone were brutal enough to say such a thing to them? Tuft felt bound to speak to Josephine about it, and confessed that these words would have wounded him deeply. She pressed his hand in silence.

When the evening came and all was quiet, they were both up-stairs with the boy and they fancied he already bore the mark of death! He fell asleep holding his mother's hand, and then Tuft gently led her away. She consented to be led now; an extra bed had been put up in the spare room, it was part of all the moving and arranging that had gone on.

The next day from early morning the parents were in with the little boy. As soon as they left, he was to be moved back to his old room where all was ready for the operation.

At ten o'clock the doctors came. Josephine was lying on the sofa in the study. She stopped her ears as soon as she heard them; the carpets were taken up so that the slightest creak of a boot was heard. She would not be comforted, nor let herself be reasoned with, and fell into that half-unconscious state she had before been in; she wanted to go up to the boy, he might die on their hands.

The minister was anxious to speak to the doctors; but she hung round him, she would go, too; so he could not leave. If anyone just moved a foot upstairs, she knew

who it was, and if the doctors moved at the same time, there must be something going on, she doubled herself up and sat crouching there with her hands to her ears. She would not let herself be taken to another room, she would stay there and be tortured; at times she went up to Tuft seeking a haven, she had worn herself out, was tired to death. "Help me!" she whispered, assuring him that her reason and her life were at stake, and that she had always known that the time would come when she would be thus miserable.

Tuft persuaded her to lie down with wet bandages on her forehead, he prayed aloud, and his love for her was so powerful that it quieted her. "Thank you, Ole, thank you!" she grew calmer.

All at once. "He is screaming!" she exclaimed; and, raising herself, would have got up. The minister assured her he heard nothing; but at the same instant they both heard it. "Yes, yes," she said, and tried to go. Tuft put both his arms round her, praying for her and blessing her. Again she calmed down. And now all was silent.

Upstairs all was going on rapidly. Kallem took the responsibility of chloroforming the boy, and the screams the parents had heard were on account of the flannel bag which Kent held over his face; the boy pushed it away; he was suffocating. "Mother, mother!" he cried; but he soon became unconscious. The old grandmother in a clean cotton gown sat by the pillow on the other side and held his hand; the old woman was trembling; but there she sat and intended to sit until all was over. No one had asked her to do it; she had herself asked God. But as soon as the boy was unconscious, Kallem said to her quite politely that now she would have to go. Slowly and silently she left the room.

Then he began. An incision, eight centimetres in length, was made between the ribs in the right side. He inserted blunt instruments into the aperture, got hold of the end of the rib-bone and sawed off a small piece; the matter streamed out of the wound.

Here they were all startled by a wild shriek behind them. Quick as lightning

Josephine had opened the door and seen these white operating coats, and Kallem, his hands covered with blood, rummaging in her child's chest--down she fell onto the floor.

"Was the door not locked?" asked Kallem. Sissel came running from the inner room, the minister from outside, they carried her out between them.

"Mind the temperature," was whispered over to the deaconess; "And lock the door!"

"But Sissel----?"

"She must stay away!"

Presently they heard her at the door, but took no notice. A tube was inserted in the cavity of the chest which was well syringed, and a tow bandage carefully put on the side. The tube was to be left there for several days and the temperature of the room day and night was to be kept at 15°. Kallem soon retired to the next room with his instruments and was out of the house before anyone, except those present at the operation, knew that he had finished.

The old grandmother, poor thing, had just come up again to listen at the door, when Sissel, who was back in the room, came out, carrying something under her apron. In passing she told her that it was all over. So the old woman ventured in; but on seeing the child lying there pale and quiet, she lost all command over herself, went out again directly, and it was only with the greatest difficulty that she managed to reach her own house.

In ordinary life it was impossible to make any sort of impression on this specimen of fossilization from the border of the sea, crushed flat by her pietistical views and walled at the north side of the house. The only one she seemed to take any interest in was the boy. Her whole house was his playroom; he was allowed to drag in there almost anything he had a fancy to, she put it away again and liked nothing better than tidying up after he had been there. Now, one would think that he would have been devoted to her on that account, but strange to say, from the moment he fell ill,

he would hardly look at his grandmother. In spite of all its severity, his mother's blunt manner had taken his fancy; he had been greatly worried by his grandmother's devotion, interspersed as it was with scoldings and threats, full of prayers which he had to learn by heart, and of Bible stories which he never understood. Now that he was so ill and weak, she was not allowed to talk to him. But it was hard on the old grandmother. Her son neglected her too, now that Josephine was more accessible. Had it not been for the coming of the deaconess, the operation might have taken place without the old woman's having heard anything of it.

A few hours later, she crept upstairs again, listened outside, could hear nothing, thought all was over and ventured to look in. Sissel sat there nodding; but looked up at once.

"Is he alive?" asked the old woman.

"Yes," answered Sissel in a voice barely audible, but her hope of him was not much greater either. The old grandmother could not bear more, she turned away. A couple of hours after she came again, and he was still alive. This time she had brought her spectacles with her and an old much-loved book; she meant to sit there till the end. Sissel could have a sleep. So she was told what there was to do, and Sissel lay down on Josephine's bed.

It was six o'clock in the evening before the minister put his head into the room--it was only now that he dared leave Josephine for a moment. He saw his mother sitting there with her spectacles and her old book of sermons, he drew nearer searching her face like a book; in it he read: "he lives!" She nodded as Sissel had done before and conveying the same meaning. He shuddered as he looked at the boy's deathly pale, worn-out face, and went away.

The house was quite quiet. In the kitchen which lay some way off, they all spoke softly, the doors were well oiled and the carpets laid down in the passages. The minister came in on tiptoe every hour and received always the same answer; there

was still life. Everybody came and went noiselessly as though spirits were moving about. In the spare room where Josephine lay, signs took the place of words.

The night was if possible more silent; grandmother had gone away, but Sissel was there; fire was burning in the kitchen and a watch was kept in case there should be anything to fetch; the minister was up and awake and went about backwards and forwards. But toward three o'clock both he and the watch fell asleep. When grandmother came in at four o'clock, Sissel was asleep too; she sat down in her seat; there was not a sound of any kind till near seven o'clock. Grandmother looked after the stove and attended to the medicine--surely little Edward breathed more easily, or was she deceiving herself?

A little before seven the door was opened slowly. She expected to see her son; but it was Josephine who came. Her large face under the disordered hair, and her wild eyes looked worse than ever in the dim light, she alarmed the old woman, who for long had been afraid for her mind. But Josephine stood still by the door, she heard Sissel's steady breathing but not the boy's; she dared not go further in. The old grandmother saw this and nodded encouragingly. A few steps forward and the mother saw her boy--fearfully pale and without a sign of life. But grandmother nodded again, so she ventured further forward. The curtains were still drawn, so she did not see well; but then she thought he breathed. She knelt down ... was he breathing easier, or ...? She was so sure in her belief that he was doomed to death, that she could not hear what she really did hear. She listened in the greatest anxiety, wondering, considering, holding her own breath the while, and only when she was quite sure that his breathing was easier, did she herself unconsciously breathe strongly and rapidly full in the boy's face. The warm whiff awoke him, he opened his eyes and looked at his mother, trying to collect his thoughts. Yes, it was mother who had come back again. His eyes grew more lively, and brighter than she had seen them for weeks past, they gazed at her until her own filled with tears. Not a word did he say, nor moved a limb from fear of the old pain; and to her it seemed as

though his spirit would fly away if he moved or if she touched him or uttered a sound. Indeed she thought her breathing was too loud, so she smothered it, and neither moved her hands nor turned her head; in this immovable stillness it was as though they were under the shadow of gathering wings. The hour was like the one in which she had given birth to him, when she heard the first gurgling sound of his living voice. And now life was beginning a second time with trembling breath. His eyes were as light in the snow. She could never weary of their fresh brightness, they floated together, his and hers, she wished it would never end.

But the boy was overcome by the power of her eyes and gave himself up to the safe feeling of her presence, so he shut his eyes again, opened them once or twice just to try ... yes, she was there, and so fell asleep.

Soon after she was down in the study. Outside was bright day; in it should come! She drew up the blinds, the daylight filled the high room with the life of life, filled her own soul to its innermost recesses--she pushed open the door to the spare room and placed herself in the doorway.

Tuft lay there broad and strong with outstretched arms, a bushy head of hair, his high forehead still shining with yesterday's perspiration, and a smile about his mouth. The light half wakened him. "Ole!" she said, he opened his eyes wide, but shut them again; he strove to settle in his memory what he had just had a glimpse of, and at the same instant from out of all this light came the words of Josephine's voice: "He lives!"

Thus, on Sunday, a man spoke from the church pulpit, taking his text from his own experiences.

He spoke of what is highest and greatest for us all.

One man forgets it in the midst of his hard struggles, a second because of his zeal, a third on account of stubbornness, a fourth in his own wisdom, a fifth from sheer force of habit, and we have all more or less been wrongly taught on the subject. "For

were I now to ask those who are listening to me, just because I ask in this place, from this pulpit, you would all unthinkingly answer: 'Faith is greatest!' Nay, but in truth it is not. Watch by thy child lying gasping for breath and on the brink of death; or see thy wife slipping gradually after the child away to that outermost edge, worn out by fear and many night-watches, then love will teach thee this, that life is first. And from this day, never again will I first seek God or God's will in any form of speech, in any sacrament, or in any book or at any place, as though He were there present; no, rather let me seek His presence in life--in life won back from the depths of the fear of death, in the victory of light, in the beauty of devotion, in the community of the living. God's most important words to us are those of life; our truest worship of him is love for all living things. However much it be a matter of course, this doctrine was what I needed more than anyone. That it is which I have put from me in different ways and from various reasons--and oftenest just latterly. But never again shall either words or signs be for me the most important; but, contrariwise, the everlasting revelation of life. Never again will I let myself be immured in any doctrine; but will let my will be set free by the warmth of life. Never again will I judge mankind by the codes of an old-world justice, if the justice of our day cannot use the language of love. Before God, never! And this because I believe in Him, the God of life, and His incessant revelation in life."

XII.

That afternoon Tuft received a most unusual visit. There was a gentle knock at the door, and at the first "Come in" no one appeared. The second time the door was opened cautiously by Sören Pedersen, and after him by slow degrees came Aase, very shy.

Their business was nothing less than to thank the minister for his sermon that day! "For nobody can live without God! at all events not ignorant people; it doesn't do; no, it doesn't do at all. And so we come like the prodigal son--Aase I suppose must

be the prodigal daughter ... (come forward do--well, just as you please!) and we wish that you will pray for God's mercy for us both." And their request was granted with all the earnest fervour that Tuft could put into a prayer. Sören said they were going direct to Dr. Kallem. "He is certainly the best man in the world, at any rate in the town. But he is mistaken in these matters. For there exists both God and spirits, and we will go and tell him so."

Tuft had himself fixed to go to Kallem that same afternoon. He was grateful to him, and he longed to acknowledge that had it not been for their cruel wronging of Ragni, not even the events of the past days would have sufficed to show him the treasures of life. He wished particularly to justify Josephine by taking her faults on his shoulders. Busy with his heavy load of dogmas, like a post-horse laden with bags full of letters, she had always been obliged to keep him company, whether she would or no; and this injustice had made her hard and suspicious.

As he set out on his way an hour or so later, all their childhood was vivid before him. He wanted then to be a missionary; perhaps now he might be one in earnest! To propound a doctrine of evolution or progress in religion was worthy of a mission, and he thought of undertaking it. The God of dogmas and his priests of olden days, must be vanquished and overcome like the idols and miracle-makers of the heathens. What though he had dreamed of becoming a bishop, strong in his theological powers, well, there was a dangerous bishopric--vacant for easily explained reasons--here in Norway.

Sigrid was standing on the steps of the upper entrance as Pastor Tuft came across the yard with long strides. She was dressed in black with a black silk kerchief over her fair hair.

"The doctor is not at home," she said in her quiet way. He turned round and went toward the hospital with the same decision. There stood Andersen's widow, also dressed in black and in a cap with black ribbons.

"Arc you still in mourning for your husband?"

"No, this time it is for Fru Kallem."

"Is Kallem here?"

"No, he went home a little while ago."

That's a mistake on your part, thought Tuft, and turned his steps in the direction of the woods; he liked having a good long walk.

There were many people out walking; they all greeted him with joyful sympathy; it was not to be mistaken. Widow Andersen's stern face had cast a shadow over him; but it vanished before the kind looks of everyone else. Again the same impetuous courage came over him as it had recently done--the courage peculiar to all newly-converted people. Just by the hospital he met Sören Pedersen and his wife who were coming away from Kallem; they too were going for a walk this bright Sunday evening so full of messages of spring.

"Was he at home?" asked Tuft. "Yes, your reverence," replied Pedersen, highly delighted.

"Well, what did the doctor say?"

"I was much pleased with what he said, your reverence. There are two kinds of persons, said he; the one kind believe only what they know; the other kind do likewise; but that which they know cannot be proved--at least only to themselves."

"He is right," and Tuft laughed as he hurried away. But the moment he was alone, the sixteenth chapter of St. Mark, sixteenth verse, was upon him; it lay in ambush for him, like a spy from his "orthodox" period. "He that believeth not shall be damned." God has no respect for "two kinds of persons." Tuft began eagerly to defend: "The sixteenth chapter, from the ninth verse upwards, is a later addition which the oldest manuscripts do not recognize. If this passage be not genuine, then no such dreadful passage can be found in any of the other three gospels. The fourth,

in which it occurs, has thereby damned itself. No, life is everything, and faith is the wondrous road to the explanation of life, that is to say, to God. By this means we shall attain the highest communion with Him, if not here, then in the next world. Faith is not for judging, but for guidance. To condemn people for their faith's sake might have been thought right in olden times; in our day it shocks us. God reveals Himself in our understanding in a higher light than that." Again he hastened back into the yard.

But again Sigrid came out on the steps. "The doctor is not at home." Her eyes avoided his; but she remained standing there immovable, her face framed in by the kerchief. The house at her back seemed like a secret, select community, full of mutual steadfastness, something he was shut out from.

Now he understood.

The price of entering there was greater than he had thought. He went home humbled, and did not mention it to Josephine.

This repulsion led to further claims on him: it urged him on along the road that would unite brother and sister together, which was the condition laid down for all else. He acknowledged openly that he had been jealous of his brother-in-law. This episode in his private life was the cause of much of the narrow-mindedness of his preaching.

He received help from outside. At first there were wondering questions, a reserved manner, which wounded him, and at times made him doubtful; but soon it came to an open fight with his nearest followers, and that urged him on. His old friend, the former porter, seemed to have longed for an opportunity of freeing himself from a debt of gratitude that weighed on him; he made a great to do and called in auxiliary troops all the way from the capital. Teachers in seminaries, schoolmasters, scientific travellers, and a few clergymen attacked Pastor Tuft at the meeting-house with all sorts of theological weapons. First and foremost he learnt to speak distinctly, for the

greater part of what they attacked him for was nothing but a misunderstanding; but he had occasion for capabilities and knowledge which he had not needed before. During this first month Josephine felt merely tired and indifferent--she had grown weaker than she could understand; but after that she began following in the steps of the peasant lad, who in days gone by had captivated her heart by his bright faith; would he come back to her?

An incident which she concealed from her husband had kept her back and prevented her gaining strength, therefore she was so languid. She too had quietly been over to her brother's the first time she was able to go out; she, too, had been met by Sigrid on the steps telling her that he was not at home;--but she had seen him standing on the veranda as she came up. With great difficulty she reached home again.

She had felt the deepest pity for him and was ready to make all manner of allowances; but his inexorableness aroused her opposition. Josephine had not the slightest idea that she herself had been jealous of Ragni, therefore she could not know that it affected her manner. She considered herself to have been at fault in being intolerant toward one who was guilty. As Sissel Aune sat upstairs beside the boy, and told her all about Ragni, how she had been lovable to the very last, she felt how unnatural it was to have overlooked Ragni's goodness of heart and Kallem's love for her. But beyond this intolerance she did not consider herself to blame.

The disappointment was great, and the consequences might have been serious if it had not been that she was so much taken up just then with her husband's struggles. A person of confused ideas, who has chiefly lived a defiant life, can only be freed when some great event happens. And such an event it was, the day that Ole said to her:

"On this, Josephine, we must stake both the living and our fortune."

Three months had gone by when she, revived by the fight, thought herself strong enough to take up the case with her brother. She wrote to him and said that whatever

they might have done wrong--they would wish to hear it right out; they ought to be worthy to be accused. Their gratitude to him was great, as they repented of their former intolerance, and wished to make every possible amends to that spirit of charity and justice which they had misjudged.

It was an excellent letter; her husband said so too.

But the days went and there came no answer. It was a mercy that just at that time Tuft was fighting some of his hardest battles. At the meeting-house, and afterwards in church, he had made use of the words Josephine had concluded her letter with.

"Justice and charity," without distinction of faith (as in the story of the good Samaritan), is the essence of Christianity. Therefore must everything be meted out with this measure, and first and foremost the doctrine itself, so that the smallest particle weighed and found wanting fell, like the theology of distant and cruel times, before the revelation of justice in our day.

That very same day he was summoned on this account to a debate; three meetings were held in the course of the week, all of them overcrowded. The principal speaker against him was a clergyman and theological publisher from the metropolis. The doctrine of hell was almost the sole subject, and Tuft maintained that what St. Paul said about it was widely different from what was in the Book of Revelations.

According to St. Paul, life here and in the next world was a state of progression, which ended by God becoming "all in all." This doctrine was up to the standard of both justice and charity. And a great impression was made, as his resonant voice, in its rapid west-country tones, shouted out across the tightly packed assembly, asking whether they thought there would ever be an end of wars and persecutions as long as the doctrine of hell, with all its cruel revenge and brutality was taught in all the schools and churches as the justice and charity of God. His opponents were "thoroughly in the style of the doctrine of hell," for they did all they could to condemn and stigmatize him as heretical.

However, there was but one opinion amongst the auditors--that for clearness of language and powers of persuasion Tuft was vastly superior to the others.

Dr. Kallem was present at the last meeting. He saw Josephine sitting there with flaming eyes, and the next day, toward evening, his answer came.

She was walking up and down before the house, watching her boy at play with the garden-hose, when the letter was given her. She recognized the writing directly, but trembled so that she could not open it. She was horrified to see how weak she still was; would she never get back the strength of her youth?

Then she went up to her room and locked herself in. It was a long letter; she turned it over and sat down to consider whether she would let Tuft read it first. But possibly there might be something about him which he was not to see.

She opened the letter.

Not a word from her brother, not a single word to her. The first that she saw was written in a strange hand, the next too, and the following after that, the whole thing, but in two different handwritings. There were some sheets of paper fastened together, some letters, a few loose scraps--not a word from Edward.

What did it signify? Involuntarily Josephine selected the least of all the papers, a little scrap of three lines:

"They destroyed my good name and I knew it not. For I knew not that I had it before it was destroyed."

On another scrap there were these words faintly written:

"Forgive them; they know not what they do!"

This delicate, flowing handwriting was of course Ragni's. Josephine began to tremble without knowing why.

Then there was a letter, written in another hand, the first words of which were in red ink. No signature. But as she read that Kallem was not to see it, she guessed it was a

love-letter from Karl Meek, which Kallem must have found afterwards. What had Josephine to do with that?

Hastily she read the first words, but was surprised at his calling her "you," and that he spoke of a sorrow which he would have borne alone, but which now had fallen upon her too, a slander----? Had she been slandered?

All through the most respectful terms. When was it written? There was no date given; but the writer of the letter was abroad; so it was after their life together here. The letter was one long wail of despair, a grief so genuine, never had she read of anything greater.

Josephine's hand shook so that she was obliged to put the letter down on the table.

She read how Karl through all this cruel slander could not think of anyone or anything else; she read how he in that way had come to love Ragni. Josephine saw this love, engendered by sorrow, gratitude, devotion, find vent in pure and touching words.

Ragni innocent? Good God, was she innocent? Then all those harrowing scenes between her and Edward, as Death separated them inch by inch from one another (Sissel Anne had so often described them to her), they must indeed have been hard to bear! Yes, now she understood why he had driven away that day with her body, and had Karl Meek by his side; only she could not understand how he had survived it.

There was a knock at the door; she started in her seat. But it was only the servant girl who came to ask her to go down to supper. She could not answer, again there was a knock. "No, no!" she managed to articulate as she writhed in sorrow and shame. She must go to her brother, she would go to him, if she went there on her knees.

But here were more papers, and she felt as though her brother was standing over her commending her to read them. She trembled and read:

"Now that I am about to copy what I have written down after many trials and failures about my childhood and my first marriage, I feel myself to be so tired--so done up. I had intended to write a few words as beginning, and looked forward to it. Now it is too late for that. Now I can only just tell to you, 'the white pasha' of my life, how it has fared with me. I have told it briefly for it was torture to me; and I have only told it so that you may defend my cause should anyone still think it worth while to speak evil of me after I am gone. Dear friend, I do not murmur. I have lived as purely and nobly as I could live; it has only been too, too short. Know, that I had thrown myself away from sheer horror of something still worse--and then you came and took me out of the deep waters and giving me in keeping of good people I found peace and all good things--till you could come again and bear me away to yourself. To think that I might share all in your home and yourself too without deserving it; for I felt that often; but I was happy all the same.

"I did not suffice for you here, I know it; but now that the end is near, it does not seem to matter. You would have borne with me as long as it lasted, I feel so sure of that."

"My friend, were I now to tell you all I feel of gratitude and admiration for you, you would not understand it; it has seemed so natural to you that all the happiness of your life came from me. And that was what was most beautiful in mine too.

"But you will not read this until the day when I no longer am sitting in this chair, and nothing can imprint my memory so vividly on you and make it live on in you, as one long, everlasting:

"Thanks."

And this was the marriage they had considered not worthy of the name! What was Josephine's compared to this!

She slipped from the chair down upon her knees. She wept and sobbed--and forced herself to silence that no one might discover her crouching there in the shame of her

crime. She folded her hands on Ragni's letter, and laid her head down on them, whispering: "Forgive me, forgive me!" though she knew that none could hear her, and that none, none could forgive her.

In a moment, she understood that Ragni had been pure in her first marriage; and that there too she had been slandered! The papers telling how this marriage had been arranged--she did not need to read them, she could not. With clammy hands she collected all the papers together, Ole must read them. Now he must help her; her life was at stake. She had committed murder, the murder of an innocent person. Not by her words or prompting, for she had said nothing. But it was just her silence, and her having that very first day repelled Ragni--just on that account the poor thing had been hopelessly lost; this all flashed through her mind like lightning; she lay there like one deaf and paralysed. The doom she had read in her brother's eyes, the death-doom--and she had not been mistaken, it was not intended for her son, it was intended for herself. She deserved death!

She was seized with horror, a cold sweat broke out over her like a stunning blow--now it was at hand!

Yes, now it was at hand! She had thought all was over when her boy was well again; but no, now it had come, now that she had regained her happiness in her husband and a firm footing altogether--now it overtook and aimed a deadly blow at her.

She hurried down to the study whilst Tuft was still at his supper and put the envelope on his desk; she had on her hat and a shawl, and now she ran rather than walked toward her brother's house; now it must break or bend.

Passing by a short cut she came right on the church. She remembered Ole's last sermon and the tears came to her eyes; for only think what it would have been if their mutual life had had such free scope and such aims from the first! She wept as she hurried down toward the terrible house. She could see the white wall of the other house shining through the foliage to the left, the house Kule lived in, Kule the

murderous instrument. No, no, no, she had not asked him to come; she had had no share in it whatever! Yes, she had heard it suggested and had thought it was quite a fair proceeding. Some had looked upon it as a good joke, others had taken it seriously, even religiously; Josephine could remember each word to which she had tacitly agreed; each thought, too, that she had had.

Murder, murder! She knew there was no forgiveness for her; of what use was it to go to her brother? He had saved her child--but beyond that he would have nothing whatever to do with her. All the same, from henceforth she was nailed to that spot; even though she might die there. She ran with all her might.

Her life was branded, after this she could never again look an honest person in the face. Cruelly and coldly she had killed an utterly, wholly innocent being, and had laid bare her brother's home! Henceforth where could she live? What should she do now? Seek her just punishment! Yes, but she would administer it herself. But first she must see him, hear him, and herself speak to him--yes, for she had something to say; he did not even know how she loved him and had always loved him, he hardly knew her. She ran on, weeping.

She saw him standing in the yard between the house and the out-houses, bending over something he was carrying; she saw him above the currant and gooseberry bush hedge visible through the opening of the taller fruit-trees. She shuddered, but she kept on her way. Soon she was under the trees of the park; then turned down to the yard; nothing divided them but the outhouse wall; then she came quite forward.

He stood with turned-up sleeves--his cuffs were off--in a yellow tussore silk coat, the same probably in which he had arrived two years ago, washing a travelling trunk under the pump; all the labels pasted on by the railway people, one on top of the other, were to be taken off; was he thinking of going away? He was sun-burnt and thin, seen in profile his face seemed sharper; then he heard her step and looked up--looked up into her tear-stained beseeching face! No trace of her former

bright-coloured dresses; a dark cotton dress with a belt round her waist, a broad, shady, straw hat with a brown ribbon, a shawl hanging on her arm. Her tears burst forth, bitterly, despairingly: "Edward!" she could get no further.

For he dropped the trunk and drew himself upright; a voice with a sort of break in it said:

"I can not forgive you, Josephine."

"Edward, let me explain myself!" She turned to the house, in horror and despair at his stern face; but he fancied she wanted to go in.

"You shall never enter there!" and he put his hands on his sides as though he were keeping guard.

XIII.

Tuft left the supper-table and went into his study; but he did not notice the envelope as he did not look at the desk. He went for a walk, which he often did in the evenings; if Josephine had been down she would have gone with him, he thought. He walked for an hour; it was Saturday and he got ready his sermon for the morrow. When he got home he sat down by the window with a book he was in want of; he read, he dawdled about, and read again till ten o'clock.

He went up to bed but did not find Josephine, neither was she in her own room, in fact, nowhere all over the house. Then he went down to the study again, he would wait for her down there; but where could she be? Gone to see some sick person? He knew of none. In mere absence of mind he took up the envelope as he passed the desk; his name was outside--was it written in Josephine's hand? He turned hot and went to the window the better to see. There was no seal; but on the top of several papers lay a little note with the following words from Josephine:

"I have gone to him for my life's sake."

What was the meaning of this?

A quarter of an hour later Tuft was on his way past the church; he, too, rather ran than walked. He was the only guilty one; long ago it was he who had given Josephine to understand that Ragni had been unfaithful to her first husband, and had thereby started everything that had since happened! And unless it had been that he was jealous of his brother-in-law, he would hardly have taken their breach with the church, their intercourse with scoffers, as sufficient reason for keeping away and avoiding them. Even if his brother-in-law were to answer that Josephine was not sufficiently a Christian to join in persecuting Ragni on that account; nor could she for that reason at once think the worst of a freethinker, then Tuft would answer that it is not true Christians who do such things, but only those who are half-Christians. That man whose love for God has become the law of his life never judges; but so much the more eagerly do the others do it. Josephine had been so situated that she could not become more than a half-Christian; these theological studies stop a man's growth.

How clearly he saw it all now! He could not bear, therefore, to think of her in her soul's distress; he ran so fast that he arrived panting through the park, the yard, and up on to the steps. The front door was locked--was it not more than ten o'clock? He rang, and rang again, heard steps in the passage, it was the step of a man, Kallem himself opened the door.

"Is Josephine not here?"

"No."

"Has she not been here?"

"Yes, about an hour and a half ago."

"Well?"

"I forbade her to enter."

"You did not even speak to her?"

"No."

Then Tuft, throwing out his right hand: "Now you, too, are ruled by dogmas," turned his back on him and went off again. His broad hat over his broad shoulders had the effect of broadly accentuating his last words.

Shortly after eleven the bell rang again, just in the same way. Kallem came out at once, he had evidently not been in bed yet.

It was Tuft who was there again; but as far as Kallem could see, without being near him, he appeared like another man, horrified and harrowed.

"Where do you think she can have gone to, Edward?"

"I think she must have gone to Ragni's grave."

A choking sob, a visible welling-up of grief, and he turned and went away. His heavy footfall was heard far off through the stillness of the grove.

Toward one o'clock there was again a ring at the door, but this time it was only one single timid peal. Kallem heard it directly and came out from the room--he was still sitting up.

A woman stood there. Kallem, who was shortsighted, hurried up to her, but the voice proved to be Sissel Aune's. "Dear, kind doctor, be good and merciful!" Kallem thought she had come on his sister's behalf, and that something had happened; he shivered. But Sissel continued: "None but you can manage him; he gets quite mad every blessed night."

"Do you mean Anne?" shouted Kallem.

"Yes, he fancies he sees Kristen Larssen after him, so he rushes away through the town, into the wood and out on the high road; this is the third night, and I cannot stand it any longer. Dear, good doctor, I have no one but you to turn to," here she began to cry, "and no one else has any power over him but you."

Had the clever bookbinder and fiddler gone mad? Then had he freed himself from

his power? Had he taken to drink again, was this delirium? No, no, he was "mad" from fear of Kristen Larssen's ghost. Kallem started directly with her.

The sky was clouded, and the night very dark; but a fresh northerly wind began to sweep the clouds away. It shook and rustled the trees by the roadside, whistling through the thick foliage and seeming to ask and ask all manner of things as they passed by. Was it not very strange that Aune, who had fooled people into believing in Kristen Larssen's ghost, should now be rushing about mad with terror of what he had himself set going? Every evening after dark, Sissel declared that Aune imagined Kristen Larssen was after him and going to take him to hell! At that instant a shriek was heard far off, one sharp, breathless call for help. It rose up like a spectre in the night, it seemed almost visible.

"There he is!" cried Sissel, clasping her hands. "Christ help us!" she shrieked, and began running.

But Kallem hurried after her: "You will only be slower like that, Sissel; go quietly--go quietly, I tell you!"

She obeyed at once, but turned eagerly to him: "Who but Satan can persecute a man like that!" she said, breathlessly. At the same moment a watch-dog began barking close by, it was startled by the cries and barked on without stopping. Kallem raised his voice above the barking:

"It does not follow that Aune is more beset by Satan, Sissel, than that angry bitch in there! Do you know how people found out Satan? They thought everything was created perfect and they were in want of somebody on whom to throw the blame when sin did come into the world."

The furious dog rushed at them just at that moment; Sissel fled over to Kallem.

"What a savage beast!" he exclaimed, and stooped to pick up a stone. The dog retreated a few paces. There came a fresh shriek, nearer than the first one, a call for help with a last expiring gasp; they shuddered, the very dog stopped short. Then it

swung round and dashed past them in the direction of the ghost.

"God help us, now he will be hurt!" said Sissel, crying and hurrying onwards; "the mad man must not be exposed to the dog's attack!"

But they heard it bark as though a wild beast were confronting it and going to fasten its teeth in it; so they both ran as hard as they could; Kallem was at once far past Sissel. It could hardly be Aune who was in danger; the last shriek had not been so near; the furious beast had attacked the first person it came upon; and who could that be? Since he was a boy Kallem had not run so fast; he could hear by the dog that there was a fight and he pushed on with renewed strength. Soon he saw something large and black by the roadside near the corner of the wood, and it was before this that the dog had stopped. Once again a piercing shriek rang out through the night; it really came from there! What was that great black mass? Surely not an animal?

No, it was a man, a big man fighting with a smaller one, and a dog with both of them. The big man kept turning round and round hitting out at the dog, at the same time keeping fast hold of the other man with his left hand. Then Kallem recognized the broad hat and the broad shoulders; it was Tuft who was holding Aune, holding him with a giant's strength; the dog was trying to attack the latter, who kicked it away from him each time. Maybe Aune thought the dog was the devil and possessed by Kristen Larssen's spirit, for the little man kicked and wriggled, bit, hit out, and struggled to get free; he threw himself backwards and with the last remains of his hoarse voice he groaned, "Help! help!" If he had been frightened before, he became so now in good earnest as he saw Kallem's figure appear in the dim light; he let himself fall and began to howl. The dog flew at his leg directly. The minister lifted them both up; the beast was in such a rage that it did not see Kallem before it got a kick from his foot which sent it flying a few metres off! One short howl and a whine--a doctor knows where to hit--and they neither saw nor heard it again; it may have been dead.

Then Kallem took hold of Aune and the minister let him go. He, too, had been much maltreated; his coat was all torn and dragging on the ground, the sleeve hung in rags down over his hand, his flannel shirt likewise. He was bleeding from bites and scratches, but was so excited that he felt no pain. Kallem took little wretched Aune with both hands by the collar, lifted him up to his level, and, panting from his run and the rapid coursing of his blood, he stared straight into his eyes, until they grew wide open, dazed, and glassy, his mouth gaped, the muscles of the face relaxed, he hung there like a gutted herring. By the time that Sissel reached them, breathless and crying, Aune lay under the trees on the grass and slept. Both the men stood over him.

Kallem said that Aune could stay where he was; there would be no dew on account of the wind; they should be sent for later. He expected to be able to cure this madness.

The minister had taken off his coat, dried the blood, and bound up the worst places; then they turned towards home.

Not a word about Aune, or how it was he had come across him; but hardly were they out on the road before Tuft said piteously:

"She was not there, Edward, she was not there!" And shortly after: "I can think of nothing else; no, now I can think of nothing else. That you could send her away from you, Edward!" The thick foliage of the trees took up the murmur and kept on unceasingly: "That you could send her away, Edward!"

"Do you know what she wrote and put beside the letters from you? 'For my life's sake I go now to my brother's.'"

Kallem felt an icy chill. A thousand voices reechoed: "For my life's sake," and the sound drew nearer, encircling him closer and closer, till he could hardly draw breath.

The day was about to dawn; Tuft's scratched and shiny face was turned toward the rising sun as though he were imploring: "Mercy, mercy for her!" He hurried along as

fast as he could; he did not know where to look for her, but he felt he must walk and walk. Kallem too.

"Oh, the horror of it, the horror of it!" he burst forth. "Do you remember the night of the storm in our childhood, Edward? We thought the world was at an end. Do you remember how frightened you were up on the hill the evening after? This whole night the 'deep-sea monsters' have been trying to reach me too. The horror of it! our soul's horror of the punishment of sins! From our childhood it drives away all our intelligence, just when we are most in need of it; we run away in despair--or cast ourselves down in the dust before God. Perchance later on we get rid of this dogma of terror, but never of its effects. As I was walking along thinking of this, I came across that madman. He leapt up; the terror was upon him; he thought I was a ghost and the dog the devil! And Josephine! She too is in despair and flees away. And you, Edward? You too must be swayed by terror if you can have the heart to torture her more than she now tortures herself. For that is the worst of terror, it hurts one; he who has been terrified himself, learns to terrify others!"

The words came from him heavily; his walk was heavy too as he plodded along. Kallem did not say a word; when he suffered he was silent.

But from a child the lay preacher's son had been accustomed to hear all life experiences converted into learning. His heart was bleeding; but he talked on all the time. Kallem ought not to doubt Josephine; she was the most honourable and truthful creature on the face of the earth. In this affair she had been led astray by him. In his deep pity for her, he laid bare her soul's history as he himself saw it, and proved to him clearly that if she were to be cast off now by her brother she could not live.

Occasionally Kallem interposed with a "Dear Ole," "Listen to me, Ole;" but never got any further. For even when they reached his home and he took his brother-in-law in with him to attend to his wounds, Tuft talked on without ceasing; it was as though

his fear and uncertainty would have increased had he been silent; and then too Edward must see her as he saw her, and above all help her! "All who have gone astray must be helped; they who have sinned against us--as soon as they acknowledge it they must be helped above all others! God's forgiveness is, to help us on." He was still going on with his explanations as Kallem accompanied him to the door; his giant strength was unfailing. But supposing that she meanwhile had gone back to her child and to him. Certainly there was no great hope of it; but he hurried away.

It grew lighter. Kallem could not sleep, and at last could not remain at home. In fear, greater than he would own to his brother-in-law, he went in and out of the rooms, up and down as though the house were to be searched. For it was true enough that he too had both judged and condemned.

His sister had always been fonder of him than he of her. That time they had danced together last winter he could tell that her love for him had not diminished. Yes, even when he struck her--had she not come then to do him good? Her attack on Ragni that time----of course there was more than dogmatical narrow-mindedness in it--it was jealousy! Jealousy because he had become all in all to Ragni and was nothing to her. He could have brought those two women together; it was impossible to doubt that. Had he tried to do that?

The more he thought of it, the less right he had to be severe; for he was guilty too! His sister's great eyes, as he had seen them last evening, were resting on him now in her direst need, they seemed to gaze full at him. All her life long, confused and shy, when not carried away by passion, hampered by unnatural doctrines and defiant in her truthfulness--she had looked out for him, from year to month, from week to day. Then he came and had cast her off. Cast her off for one who was not worthy of him--so it seemed to her.

Poor, poor Josephine! He had thus never been anything for her, had only harmed

her, and yet she in her faithfulness had always longed for him.

The rooms became oppressive and he felt afraid; he must go out and look for her. It was getting lighter and lighter and with the feeling that morning was near, he threw open the veranda doors; but he had nothing to do out there; on the contrary he would have to shut them again if he were really going out. So he stepped out to close them again and in doing so glanced on one side--and there, sheltered from the north wind by the veranda, sitting on Ragni's bench just under his office windows, was Josephine, with her shawl over her knees. She saw him and crouched down like a wounded bird, which cannot move away, yet must not be seen. And yet she was sitting there just to be seen. There was nowhere else she could be, for she had tried. He hurried down the steps toward her. Then she trembled:

"Oh, no, Edward, oh, no; let me stay," she implored and burst into tears. And even when he took her by the arm and raised her up she kept on beseeching him, weak as any child: "Oh, no, no, Edward, let me----" but she got no further, for she felt herself folded in his arms, and felt how he too was quivering with the emotion he could not control. He was not cruel, perchance he would listen to her, and she raised her arms and threw them round him mingling her tears with his; the brother and sister stood with their heads together, cheek resting upon cheek, all the similarity of their temperament, their first and oldest feelings, their love of homelike things, down to the very smell of their clothes in the passages at their parent's house, all this met together in their one desire never again to part.

And yet, when he began to move with her toward the veranda, she stopped; she could not believe that she would be allowed to go in. She looked at him through her tears; he forced her along, step by step. On the steps she again held back. But he led her on till they stood in the room; here she clasped her arms round him again and sinking down upon a chair, buried her face in her hands--everything in the room, he too, seemed listening to her sobs.

Then he went up to her and stroked her hair; but he knew it was not really he who did it, it was Ragni!

Arm in arm they walked that summer's night through the town that was so wide-awake, although everyone seemed asleep. The long steps of brother and sister hurried on, keeping time as of old; they said nothing about it, but they were looking for Ole; forgot the short cut and came down the road to the shore. Soon they turned up toward the minister's house. They had just gone a few steps along the road, when Josephine as it were felt drawn to look across the shore. She stopped directly and held back Edward.

"Yes, it is he!" she whispered.

Tuft came hurrying from out yonder, quickly, quickly, but with hanging head as though he could not bear it. In vain he had searched for her along the shore, he was now going on with his search further southward--quickly as ever, though ever in vain. They both understood, her arm trembled in that of her brother. She pressed closer up to him, for just a moment ago she had told him that had she been driven out of his garden, then----! Hush! They turned now and went to meet Ole. His quick ear heard the steps, he looked up, recognized her, opened his arms and could neither go a step further nor utter a sound. But Josephine left her brother's arm and went to him.

All three walked slowly homewards, the minister with Josephine on his arm, and Kallem at his other side. He said repeatedly: "God's ways! God's ways!"

"But I do not share your faith," Kallem felt bound to interpose.

"No, no, no, no," exclaimed the minister eagerly. "There where good people walk, those are God's ways."

FOOTNOTES:

Footnote 1: One Norwegian mile = seven English miles.

Footnote 2: A Norwegian country-dance.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK IN GOD'S WAY: A NOVEL ***

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