Master Olof

by August Strindberg

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MASTER OLOF

A DRAMA IN FIVE ACTS

By August Strindberg

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INTRODUCTION

The original prose version of Master Olof, which is here presented for the first time in English form, was written between June 8 and August 8, 1872, while Strindberg, then only twenty-three years old, was living with two friends on one of the numerous little islands that lie between Stockholm and the open sea.

Up to that time he had produced half-a-dozen plays, one of which had been performed at the Royal Theatre of Stockholm and had won him the good-will and financial support of King Carl XV. Thus he had been able to return to the University of Upsala, whence he had been driven a year earlier by poverty as well as by spiritual revolt. During his second term of study at the old university Strindberg wrote some plays that he subsequently destroyed. In the same period he not only conceived the idea later developed in Master Olof, but he also acquired the historical data underlying the play and actually began to put it into dialogue.

During that same winter of 1871-72 he read extensively, although his reading probably had slight reference to the university curriculum. The two works that seem to have taken the lion's share of his attention were Goethe's youthful drama Goetz von Berlichingen and Buckle's History of Civilization in England. Both impressed him deeply, and both became in his mind logically connected with an external event which, perhaps, had touched his supersensitive soul more keenly than anything else: an event concerning which he says in the third volume of The Bondwoman's Son, that "he had just discovered that the men of the Paris Commune merely put into action what Buckle preached."

Such were the main influences at work on his mind when, early in 1872, his royal protector died, and Strindberg found himself once more dependent on his own resources. To continue at the university was out of the question, and he seems to have taken his final departure from it without the least feeling of regret. Unwise as he may have been in other respects, he was wise enough to realize that, whatever his goal, the road to it must be of his own making. Returning to Stockholm, he groped around for a while as he had done a year earlier, what he even tried to eke out a living as the editor of a trade journal. Yet the seeds sown within him during the previous winter were sprouting. An irresistible impulse urged him to continue the work of Buckle. History and philosophy were the ultimate ends tempting his mind, but first of all he was impelled to express himself in terms of concrete life, and the way had been shown him by Goethe. Moved by Goethe's example, he felt himself obliged to break through the stifling forms of classical drama. "No verse, no eloquence, no unity of place," was the resolution he formulated straightway. [Note: See again The Bondwoman's Son, vol. iii: In the Red Room.]

Having armed himself with a liberal supply of writing-paper, he joined his two friends in the little island of Kymmendö. Of money he had so little that, but for the generosity of one of his friends, he would have had to leave the island in the autumn without settling the small debt he owed for board and lodging. Yet those months

were happy indeed—above all because he felt himself moved by an inspiration more authentic than he had ever before experienced. Thus page was added to page, and act to act, until at last, in the surprisingly brief time of two months, the whole play was ready—mighty in bulk and spirit, as became the true firstling of a young Titan.

Strindberg had first meant to name his play "What Is Truth?" For a while he did call it "The Renegade," but in the end he thought both titles smacked too much of tendency and decided instead, with reasoned conventionalism, to use the title of Master Olof after its central figure, the Luther of Sweden.

From a dramatic point of view it would have been hard to pick a more promising period than the one he had chosen as a setting for his play. The early reign of Gustaf Vasa, the founder of modern Sweden, was marked by three parallel conflicts of equal intensity and interest: between Swedish and Danish nationalism; between Catholicism and Protestantism; and, finally, between feudalism and a monarchism based more or less on the consent of the governed. Its background was the long struggle for independent national existence in which the country had become involved by its voluntary federation with Denmark and Norway about the end of the fourteenth century. That Struggle—made necessary by the insistence of one sovereign after another on regarding Sweden as a Danish province rather than as an autonomous part of a united Scandinavia—had reached a sort of climax, a final moment of utter blackness just before the dawn, when, at Stockholm in 1520, the Danish king, known ever afterward as Christian the Tyrant, commanded the arbitrary execution of about eighty of Sweden's most representative men.

Until within a few months of that event, named by the horror-stricken people "the blood-bath of Stockholm," the young Gustaf Eriksson Vasa had been a prisoner in Denmark, sent there as a hostage of Swedish loyalty. Having obtained his freedom by flight, he made his way to the inland province of Dalecarlia, where most of the previous movements on behalf of national liberty had originated, and having cleared

the country of foreign invaders, chiefly by the help of an aroused peasantry that had never known the yoke of serfdom, he was elected king at a Riksdag held in the little city of Strängnäs, not far from Stockholm, in 1523.

Strängnäs was a cathedral city and had for several years previous been notorious for the Lutheran leanings of its clergy. After the death of its bishop as one of the victims of King; Christian, its temporary head had been the archdeacon, the ambitious and learned Lars Andersson—or Laurentius Andreae, as, in accordance with the Latinizing tendency of the time, he was more frequently named. One of its canons was Olof Pedersson—also known as Olaus Petri, and more commonly as Master Olof (Master being the vernacular for Magister, which was the equivalent of our modern Doctor)—who, during two years spent in studies at the University of Wittenberg, had been in personal contact with Luther, and who had become fired with an aspiration to carry the Reformation into his native country. By recent historians Master Olof has been described as of a "naively humble nature," rather melancholy in temperament, but endowed with a gift for irony, and capable of fiery outbursts when deeply stirred. At Strängnäs he had been preaching the new faith more openly and more effectively than any one else, and he had found a pupil as well as a protector in the temporary head of the diocese.

Immediately after his election, the new King called Lars Andersson from Strängnäs to become his first chancellor. Later on, he pressed Olof, too, into his service, making him Secretary to the City Corporation of Stockholm—which meant that Olof practically became the chief civil administrator of the capital, having to act as both clerk and magistrate, while at the same time he was continuing his reformatory propaganda as one of the preachers in the city's principal edifice, officially named after St. Nicolaus, but commonly spoken of as Greatchurch. As if this were not sufficient for one man, he plunged also into a feverish literary activity, doing most of the work on the Swedish translations of the New and Old Testaments, and paving the way for the new faith by a series of vigorous polemical writings, the style of

which proclaims him the founder of modern Swedish prose. Centuries passed before the effective simplicity and homely picturesqueness of his style were surpassed. He became, furthermore, Sweden's first dramatist. The Comedy of Tobit, from which Strindberg uses a few passages in slightly modernized form at the beginning of his play, is now generally recognized as an authentic product of Olof's pen, although it was not written until a much later period.

Strindberg's drama starts at Strängnäs, at the very moment when Olof has been goaded into open revolt against the abuses of the Church, and when he is saved from the consequences of that revolt only by the unexpected arrival of King Gustaf and his own appointment as City Secretary. From the slightly strained, but not improbable, coincidence of that start to the striking climax of the last act, the play follows, on the whole, pretty closely the actual course of events recorded in history. To understand this course, with its gradually intensified conflict between the King and Olof, it is above all necessary to bear in mind that the former regarded the Reformation principally as a means toward that political reorganization and material upbuilding of the country which formed his main task; while to Olof the religious reconstruction assumed supreme importance. This fundamental divergence of purpose is clearly indicated and effectively used by Strindberg, and we have reason to believe that he has pictured not only Gustaf Vasa and Master Olof, but also the other historical characters, in close accordance with what history has to tell us about them. Among the chief figures there is only one—Gert the Printer—who is not known to history, and one—the wife of Olof—who is so little known that the playwright has been at liberty to create it almost wholly out of his own imagination.

At the juncture represented by the initial scenes of the play, Olof was in reality thirty-one years old, but he is made to appear still younger. The King should be, and is, about twenty-seven, while Lars Andersson is about fifty-four, and Bishop Brask about seventy. Gert must be thought a man of about sixty, while Christine must be about twenty. The action of the play lasts from 1524 to 1540, but Strindberg has

contracted the general perspective, so to speak, giving us the impression that the entire action takes place within a couple of years. I have tried to work out a complete chronology, and think it fairly safe to date the several parts of the play as follows:

The first act takes place on Whitsun Eve, 1524, which means that the exact date must fall between May 10 and June 13 of that year, and probably about June 1.

The first scene of the second act occurs in the early evening of a Saturday in the summer—probably in June—of 1524. The second scene is fixed at midnight of the same day, and the third scene on the following morning, which, in view of the fact that Olof is to preach, we may assume to be a Sunday.

The first scene of the third act seems to take place four days later, but Olof was not married until February, 1525,—to "Christine, a maiden of good family,"—and it was only during the winter of 1526-27 that the Church reformers were given free rein by the King, and Olof himself was despatched to the University of Upsala for the purpose of challenging Peder Galle, the noted Catholic theologian, to a joint discussion. This was also the time when the first Swedish version of the New Testament was completed by Olof and Lars Andersson—an event referred to in the scene in question.

The exact date of the second scene of the third act is St. John's Eve, or June 24, 1527, at which time occurred the important Riksdag at Vesterås, where the King broke the final resistance of the nobility and the Catholic clergy by threatening to abdicate. The debate between Olof and Peder Galle took place at the Riksdag, Galle having evaded it as long as he could.

The date of the fourth act is very uncertain, but it seems safe to place it in the summer of 1539, when Stockholm was ravaged by an epidemic of a virulent disease known as "the English sweat."

The first scene of the fifth act is laid on New Year's Eve, 1539, when Olof and Lars

Andersson were arrested and charged with high treason for not having informed the proper authorities of a plot against the King's life. This plot was an old story, having been exposed and punished in 1536. Their defence was that they had learned of it through secret confession, which they as ministers had no right to reveal. The trial took only two days, and on January 2, 1540, both were sentenced to death.

The second scene of the final act must be laid in the spring of 1540, as the ceremony of confirmation has generally taken place about Easter ever since the Swedish church became Lutheran.

While, in the main, Strindberg made the events of his play accord with what was accepted as historical fact when he wrote, there are anachronisms and inaccuracies to be noted, although to none of them can be attached much importance. When, in the first and second acts, he represents the Anabaptist leaders, Rink and Knipperdollink, as then in Stockholm and actually introduces one of them on the stage, he has merely availed himself of a legend which had been accepted as truth for centuries, and which has been exploded only by recent historical research. We know now that Rink and Knipperdollink could never have been in Sweden, but we know also that a German lay preacher named Melchior Hofman appeared at Stockholm about the time indicated in the play, and that, in 1529, another such preacher, named Tilemann, made Olof himself the object of his fierce invectives. These instances serve, in fact, to prove how skilfully Strindberg handled his historical material. He is never rigid as to fact, but as a rule he is accurate in spirit. Another instance of this kind is found in the references in the first act to the use of Swedish for purposes of worship. It is recorded—and by himself, I think—that Olof once asked his mother whether she really understood the Latin prayers, since she was so very fond of them. She answered: "No, I don't understand them, but when I hear them I pray devoutly to God that they may please Him, which I don't doubt they do."

On the other hand, what maybe regarded as rather an awkward slip is found in the first scene of the fifth act, where Gert cries exultantly to Olof: "You don't know that Thomas Münster has established a new spiritual kingdom at Mühlhausen." The name of the great Anabaptist "prophet" was Thomas Münzer, and the place where he established his brief reign was Münster. Strindberg's habit was to fill his head with the facts to be used, and then to rely on his memory. Marvellous as his memory was, it sometimes deceived him, and checking off names or dates seems to have been utterly beyond him. Thus it is quite probable that the passage in question represents an unconscious error. At the same time it is barely possible that the mistake may have been purposely laid in the mouth of a fanatic, from whom exactness of statement could hardly be expected. Thus, in the first act, Gert remarks that "Luther is dead." We understand, of course, that this expression is metaphorical, signifying that Luther has done all that can be expected of him, but it is nevertheless characteristically ambiguous.

The second scene of the third act is apparently laid in Olof's house at Stockholm, although the location of the building is not definitely indicated. We find him waiting for a messenger who is to announce the results of the Riksdag then in session. But the Riksdag was held at Vesterås, and we know that Olof was one of two delegates sent by the burghers and the peasants to the King, whom they implored "on their knees and with tears" to withdraw his abdication. The Courtier's reference to Olof's debate with Galle renders it still more uncertain whether we are in Stockholm or in Vesterås. The Courtier also informs Olof of his appointment as pastor of Greatchurch, the facts being that Olof was not ordained until 1539 and received his appointment a year after the events described in the last act of the play. In the metrical version, Strindberg makes his most radical departure from the historical course of events by letting Luther's marriage precede and influence that of Olof, although in reality Olof's anticipated that of Luther by several months.

The complaints of the Man from Småland in the first scene of the second act could

scarcely have been warranted in 1524, when that act takes place. The hold of the young King was far too precarious at that early date to permit any regulations of the kind referred to. The establishment of a maximum price on oxen does not seem to have occurred until 1532, and a prohibition against the shooting of deer by the peasants was actually issued in 1538, both measures helping to provoke the widespread uprising that broke out in Småland in 1541. It was named the "Dacke feud" after its principal leader, the peasant-chieftain Nils Dacke, to whom the Sexton refers in the second scene of the last act—also a little prematurely.

Whether these be conscious or unconscious anachronisms, they matter very little when the general accuracy of the play is considered. From the moment the Danes had been driven out of the country, one of the most serious problems confronting the King was the financial chaos into which the country had fallen, and his efforts, first of all to raise enough means for ordinary administrative purposes, and secondly to reorganize trade and agriculture, brought him almost immediately into conflict with the peasants, who, during the long struggle for national independence, had become accustomed to do pretty much as they pleased. The utterances of the Man from Småland are typical of the sentiments that prevailed among the peasants throughout the country, not least when he speaks of the King's intention to "take away their priests and friars," for the majority of the Swedish people were at that time still intensely Catholic, and remained so to a large extent long after the Reformation officially had placed Sweden among Protestant countries.

Much more serious than any liberties taken with dates or facts, I deem certain linguistic anachronisms, of which Strindberg not rarely becomes guilty. Thus, for instance, he makes the King ask Bishop Brask: "What kind of phenomenon is this?" The phrase is palpably out of place, and yet it has been used so deliberately that nothing was left for me to do but to translate it literally. The truth is that Strindberg was not striving to reproduce the actual language of the Period—a language of which we get a glimpse in the quotations from The Comedy of Tobit. Here and there

he used archaic expressions (which I have sometimes reproduced and sometimes disregarded, as the exigencies of the new medium happened to require). At other times he did not hesitate to employ modern colloquialisms (most of which have been "toned down"). He did not regard local color or historical atmosphere as a supreme desideratum. He wanted to express certain ideas, and he wanted to bring home the essential humanity of historical figures which, through the operations of legendary history, had assumed a strange, unhuman aspect. The methods he employed for these purposes have since been made familiar to the English-speaking public by the historical plays of Bernard Shaw and the short stories and novels of Anatole France.

In his eagerness, however, to express what was burning for utterance in his own breast, the second purpose was sometimes lost sight of; and at such times Strindberg hesitated as little to pass the bounds imposed by an historical period as to break through the much more important limitations of class and personal antecedents. Thus, for example, the remarks of Olof's mother are at one moment characterized by the simplicity to be expected from the aged widow of a small city tradesman in the early part of the sixteenth century, while in the next—under the pressure of the author's passion for personal expression—they grow improbably sophisticated. Yet each figure, when seen in proper perspective, appears correctly drawn and strikingly consistent with the part assigned to it in the play. In his very indifference to minor accuracies, Strindberg sometimes approaches more closely to the larger truth than men more scrupulous in regard to details. How true he can be in his delineation of a given type is perhaps best shown by the figure of Gert. The world's literature holds few portrayals of the anarchistic temperament that can vie with it in psychological exactness, and it is as true to-day as it was in 1524 or in 1872.

This verisimilitude on a universal rather than a specific plane assumes still greater significance if we consider it in the light of what Strindberg has told us about his purpose with the main characters of his first great play. As I have already said, those characters were meant to be both mouthpieces of the author and revived historical

figures, but they were also meant—and primarily, I suspect—to be something else: embodiments of the contradictory phases of a single individual, namely the author himself.

"The author meant to hide his own self behind the historical characters," Strindberg tells us, apropos of this very play. [Note: In one of his biographical novels, The Bondwoman's Son, vol. iii: In the Red Room.] "As an idealist he was to be represented by Olof; as a realist by Gustaf; and as a communist by Gert." Farther on in the same work, he continues his revelation as follows: "The King and his shadow, the shrewd Constable, represented himself [the author] as he wished to be; Gert, as he was in moments of aroused passion; and Olof, as, after years of self-scrutiny, he had come to know himself: ambitious and weak-willed; unscrupulous when something was at stake, and yielding at other times; possessed of great self-confidence, mixed with a deep melancholy; balanced and irrational; hard and gentle."

Finally, he gives us this illuminating exposition of his own views on the moral validity of the main characters, thus disposing once for all of the one-sided interpretations made by persons anxious to use this or that aspect of the play in support of their own political or social idiosyncrasies: "All the chief characters are, relatively speaking, in the right. The Constable, from the standpoint of his own day, is right in asking Olof to keep calm and go on preaching; Olof is right in admitting that he had gone too far; the scholar, Vilhelm, is right when, in the name of youth, he demands the evolution of a new truth; and Gert is right in calling Olof a renegade. The individual must always become a renegade—forced by the necessity of natural laws; by fatigue; by inability to develop indefinitely, as the brain ceases to grow about the age of forty-five; and by the claims of actual life, which demand that even a reformer must live as man, mate, head of a family, and citizen. But those who crave that the individual continue his progress indefinitely are the shortsighted—particularly those who think that the cause must perish because the

individual deserts it.... It is an open question, for that matter, whether Olof did not have a better chance to advance his cause from the pulpit of the reformed Greatchurch than he would have had in low-class taverns."

These passages were written by Strindberg fourteen years after the completion of the play to which they refer. We have other evidence, however, that, while he might have seen things more clearly in retrospect, he had not been lured by the lapse of time into placing his characters in a light different from that in which they were conceived. On the list of characters forming part of the original handwritten manuscript of the first version of Master Olof, now preserved in the Public Library of Gothenburg, Sweden, the author has jotted down certain very significant notes opposite the more important names. Thus he has written opposite the name of the King: "To accomplish something in this world, one has to risk morality and conscience;" opposite the name of Olof: "He who strives to realize an idea develops greatness of personality—he accomplishes good by his personal example, but he is doomed to perish;" opposite that of Bishop Brask: "There is movement in whatever exists—whatever stands still must be crushed;" and opposite that of Gert: "He who wills more than his reason can grasp must go mad."

Such was the play with which the young Strindberg returned to the Swedish capital in the fall of 1872; and let us remember in this connection, that up to the time in question no dramatic work of similar importance had ever been produced in Sweden. Its completion was more epoch-making for Sweden than that of Brand was for Norway in 1865—since the coming of Ibsen's first really great play was heralded by earlier works leading up to it, while Master Olof appeared where nobody had any reason to expect it. This very fact militated against its success, of course; it was too unexpected, and also too startlingly original, both in spirit and in form.

At the time there was only one stage in Sweden where such a work could be produced—the Royal Theatre at Stockholm. To the officials of this state—supported

institution Strindberg submitted his work—hopefully, as we know from his own statement. It was scornfully and ignominiously rejected, the main criticism being that a serious historical drama in prose was unthinkable. I shall make no comment whatever on that judgment, having in mind how several years later Edmund Gosse bewailed the failure of Ibsen to give a metrical form to his Emperor and Galilean.

Strindberg's next effort concerned publication. In this respect he was equally unsuccessful, although as a rule it has never been very difficult in Sweden to find a publisher for any work of reasonable merit. But the play was not only too original, it was too dangerously radical for a country where a truly modern form of representative government had not been achieved until seven years earlier. Strindberg was at first stunned by this failure. He seriously contemplated giving up writing altogether. When he had recovered somewhat, he seems reluctantly to have faced the possibility that the fault might be found in the play and not in the public.

So he set about to re-write it—and he did so not only once but repeatedly, producing in all six versions that differ more or less from one another. At first he clung to the prose form. Gradually he began to introduce verse, until finally, in 1877 or 1878, he completed an almost new play, where the metrical form predominated without being used exclusively. This version was actually published in 1878. Originally, an epilogue was appended to it, but this was dropped from all but a small part of the first edition. It is supposed to take place a number of years later than the fifth act, and shows Olof with his two sons outside the city walls of Stockholm, where they witness a miracle-play introducing God as the principle of darkness and Lucifer as the overthrown but never conquered principle of light. The bitter generalizations of this afterthought explain Sufficiently why it was excluded. To the later Strindberg—the man who wrote Advent, for instance—it must have seemed one of his most unforgivable offences.

Although Strindberg's main object in working over his play undoubtedly was to

obtain its production, the metrical version was not put on the stage until 1890, when, however, it was performed at the Royal Theatre, toward which its author had looked so longingly and so vainly eighteen years earlier. The prose version, on the other hand, was produced as early as 1881, at the New Theatre in Stockholm, but was not published until the same year, when it appeared in book form grouped with a number of other writings from Strindberg's earliest period.

Of the five unprinted versions connecting the original prose drama of 1872 with the final metrical form of 1878, more or less complete manuscripts have been preserved, and these are now being examined in detail by the Swedish literary historian, Professor Karl Warburg. A summary analysis by Dr. John Landquist is appended to the second volume of the definitive edition of Strindberg's complete works (Albert Bonnier, Stockholm), where the epilogue to the metrical version is also reprinted after so many years of oblivion.

"Of all the manuscripts preceding the final metrical version," says Dr. Landquist, "the original one, written when Strindberg was twenty-three, is the masterpiece. There everything is consistent; there the dialogue has a power and an incisiveness to which it does not attain in any of the unprinted manuscripts. On the contrary, these seem more youthful than the original, producing at times an impression of immaturity and uncertainty on the part of the author. Even when some isolated phrase strikes one as fortunate, it does not tend to strengthen the drama as a whole. The later versions lack that sense of inner unity and that audacious touch which lend fascination and power to the original manuscript.

"Not until we reach the first metrical version (of 1876) does the full power of the playwright begin to reassert itself in such fashion that out of his untiring labors at last springs a new work, the mood of which differs essentially from that of the first prose version. These two versions—the first and the final—are the results of diametrically opposed methods of work. The first was written with a certainty and

swiftness of inspiration that raised the young poet far above the productive powers generally characteristic of his years. The subsequent modifications prove merely how futile are the efforts of reason to improve what intuition has inspired. But gradually it seems to have dawned on the poet that he was about to evolve a wholly new work—that what he had come to aim at was quite distinct from what he had been aiming at in the beginning, and from that moment his artistic reasoning carried him onward until at last a new inspiration brought the work to its completion."

Concerning the final metrical version, I can give only a few outstanding and rather superficial facts, hoping that I may some time have the opportunity of presenting it entire to the American public. Like the prose version, it has five acts, but these are not subdivided into scenes. It is briefer, more concentrated both in spirit and in form, and may be said to display a greater unity of purpose. It is more human, too, and less titanic. The change shows itself strikingly in a figure like that of Mårten, who in the metrical version has become softened into an unconscionable but rather lovable rapscallion. The last remark but one made by Mårten when driven from Dame Christine's deathbed by Olof is: "Talk to your mother, son—the two of you have so much to forgive each other."

In strength and passion and daring, on the other hand, the final version falls far short of the original one, and the very fact that it is more logical, more carefully reasoned, tends at times to render it less psychologically true. Each version has its own merits and its own faults, and in their appeal they are so radically different that a choice between them must always remain meaningless except on temperamental grounds. At one point, however—and an important one at that—the metrical version seems to me the happier by far.

That cry of "renegade," which, echoing from the dim recesses of the church, makes the prose version end on a note of perplexing irony, may be theatrically effective, but it can hardly be called logical. Gert has been disposed of. His sudden return out

of the clutches of the soldiers is inexplicable and unwarranted. Worse still, he has only a short while previous been urging Olof to live on for his work. If Olof be a renegade, he is so upon the advice of Gert himself, and to call the concession made by Olof for the saving of his own life far-reaching enough to explain Gert's sudden change of attitude approaches dangerously near to quibbling. In the metrical version, on the other hand, the same cry of "renegade" is quite logically and suitably wrung from the lips of Vilhelm, the scholar who is still dreaming of uncompromised ideals. But it is not the final word. This comes from Olof, and takes the form of a brief apostrophe to the fleeing Vilhelm, which I think ranks with the finest passages produced by Strindberg. Apologetically, I offer this English version of it as a fitting close to my Introduction:

Olof. Oh, what a word! But though it shook the air, These columns did not stir, nor fell the dome, And I stand calm upon this lonely shore, Where I was dropped by the receding waves— For, after all, I am ashore. And now A last "good luck upon the road" I send To speed the daring sailor who will give No ear to one that just has come to grief. With sails hauled close, steer for the open sea And for the far-off goal your soul desires! Ere long you must fall off like all the rest, Although a star your guiding landmark be For in due time the stars themselves must fall!

EDWIN BJORKMAN MAY 15, 1915

MASTER OLOF

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

OLOF PEDERSSON (Olaus Petri), generally known as MASTER OLOF. GERT THE PRINTER. GUSTAF ERIKSSON VASA, King of Sweden. HANS BRASK, Bishop of Linköping. MÅNS SOMMAR, Bishop of Strängnäs. LARS SIGGESON, Lord High Constable. LARS ANDERSSON (Laurentius Andreae), Lord High Chancellor. LARS PEDERSSON (Laurentius Petri), brother of Master Olof. HANS

WINDRANK, a Master Mariner. A Man from Småland. A German. A Dane. MÅRTEN and NILS, Black Friars. A Tavern-keeper. A Burier. First Scholar. Second Scholar. The Sexton at St. Nicolaus (or Greatchurch). A Servant of the Palace. An Overseer. A Townsman. A Courtier. DAME CHRISTINE, Olof's mother. CHRISTINE, daughter of Gert the Printer. A Harlot. A Woman. The Sexton's Wife. The Abbess of St. Clara. Headsman, Townsfolk, Laborers, etc.

ACT I: At Strängnäs.

ACTS II, III, IV, AND V: At Stockholm.

ACT I

(A Cloister opening upon a Convent Close planted with groups of trees. The convent church forms the right side of the quadrangle. A brick wall runs along the rear. Fruit trees in blossom appear above the wall. Olof is seated on a stone bench. Before him stand two scholars, who are reading their respective parts out of "The Comedy of Tobit.")

First Scholar.

Now have our enemies trapped us full well. Woe unto us, poor children of Israel!

Second Scholar.

Yea, brother, good cause you have to make such plaint! Now certes we have come upon days of great lament— Our land is taken away, and so's our increase, And ne'er we may look for any help or surcease. It must be, as long I have both dreamt and said, That the promise to Abram has been long mislaid.

[Enter Lars Andersson.]

Lars Andersson. What are you doing?

Olof. I am playing.

Lars. Playing—you?

Olof. I am playing a little comedy about the children of Israel and the Babylonian captivity.

Lars. Have you nothing better to do? Bigger work is waiting for you.

Olof. I am too young.

Lars. Do not say you are too young.

Olof. No, for there are plenty of others who say it.

Lars (takes out a roll of paper, which he opens; for a while he stands looking at Olof; then he begins to read) "Then the word of the Lord came unto Jeremiah: 'Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.'

"Then said Jeremiah: 'Ah, Lord God! behold, I cannot speak, for I am a child.'

"But the Lord said: 'Say not, I am a child; for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak. For, behold, I have made thee this day a defenced city, and an iron pillar, and brazen walls against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, against the princes thereof, against the priests thereof, and against the people of the land. And they shall fight against thee; but they shall not prevail against thee; for I am with thee,' saith the Lord, 'to deliver thee.'"

Olof (leaping to his feet). Did the Lord say that?

Lars. "Thou therefore gird up thy loins and arise, and speak unto them all that I command thee."

Olof. Why do not you go?

Lars. I am too old.

Olof. You are afraid!

Lars. I am, for I have not the strength; but you have—and now may the Lord give you the faith also.

Olof. Oh, once I did have the flame of faith, and it burned wondrously, but the monkish gang smothered it with their holy water when they were trying to read the devil out of my body.

Lars. That was a fire of straw which had to flicker out; but now the Lord will light you a fire of logs by which the offspring of the Philistines shall be consumed. Do you know your own will, Olof?

Olof. No, but I feel myself choking when I think of these poor people who yearn for salvation. They are crying for water—for living water—but there is no one who can give it to them.

Lars. Tear down the crumbling old house first, you can do that. Then the Lord Himself will build them a new one.

Olof. Then they will be without a roof over their heads for a time.

Lars. They will at least get fresh air.

Olof. But to rob a whole nation of its faith—they will despair.

Lars. Yes, they will despair.

Olof. But they will decry me, and revile me, and drag me before the elders.

Lars. Are you afraid?

Olof. No—but the offence—

Lars. You were born to give offence, Olof; you were born to smite. The Lord will heal.

Olof. I can feel the pull of the current; I am still clinging to the sluice-gate, but if I let go, I shall be swept away.

Lars. Let go! There are more than enough who hold back.

Olof. Reach out your hand to me, Lars, if I get too far into the whirlpool.

Lars. That is not in my power, and into the whirlpool you must go, even if it be to

perish.

Olof. What storms you have raised in my soul! A moment ago I sat here and played in the shadow of the trees, and it was Whitsun Eve, and it was spring, and all was peace. And now—how can the trees be still, and why is there no darkness in the sky? Put your hand on my forehead, feel the blood surging! Do not abandon me, Lars! I see an angel coming towards me with a cup—she is walking across the evening sky—her path is blood-red, and in her hand she is carrying a cross—No, it is more than I avail! I will return to my peaceful valley. Let others fight; I will look on—No, I will follow in their wake and heal the wounded and whisper words of peace into the ears of the dying—Peace!—No, I want to fight with the rest, but in the last ranks—Why should I lead?

Lars. Because you are the boldest.

Olof. Not the strongest?

Lars. The strong will come after you: and the strongest of all is by your side; it is He who summons you to battle.

Olof. Help me, O Lord! I go.

Lars. Amen!

Olof. And will you come with me?

Lars. You must go alone—with God!

Olof. Why do you turn back?

Lars. I was not born to be a warrior: your armorer is all that I can be. Your weapon is the pure Word of God, and with that you must arm the people. For the doors to the popish armory have been broken open at last, and hereafter every one calling himself a man must fight for the freedom of his own spirit.

Olof. But where is the enemy? I am burning for battle, yet see no one to fight against.

Lars. No need to summon them; they will come! Farewell! You may begin whenever you are ready, and may God be with you!

Olof. Don't go. I have much more to talk with you about.

Lars. Here comes the vanguard now—to arms!

[Exit Lars.]

(A crowd of townsmen with their women and children pass across the stage to the church door at the right. They stop in front of it, bare their heads, and make the sign of the cross.)

Gert the Printer (disguised as a townsman). It's Whitsun Eve, and nobody has rung the vesper bell—that's very strange.

A Townsman. The church door is closed. Maybe the priest is sick.

Gert. Or not yet out of bed.

Townsman. What do you mean?

Gert. Only that he might be sick abed.

Townsman. But there are a lot of acolytes, and one of them might be saying a mass for us in his place.

Gert. They are probably too busy.

Townsman. With what?

Gert. That's hard to tell.

Townsman. Take care, my good man! You seem to have a leaning towards Lutherism. Bishop Hans of Linköping is here, and so's the King.

Gert. Is Brask in town?

Townsman. Indeed he is. But I suppose we had better try the church door to see if it be really closed.

Gert (runs up the steps and beats the church door with his fist).The house of God is

closed this Whitsun Eve. The reverend clergy will grant no audience with the Lord to-day, and so the worshipful commonalty will have to go home and go to bed without any mass. Look here, good folk! Here you have a door—mere wood, of course, but that matters little, as it is lined with copper. Just take a look at this door! If I say that the Lord is living within—this being His house; and if I say that the bishop's diaconus, or secretarius, or canonicus, or some other fellow ending in 'us'—for it's only these clerical gentlemen that end in 'us'; and if I say that some fellow of that kind has the key hanging on a nail in his bedroom: then I don't mean to say that he has locked up the Lord and put the key on a nail in his bedroom: but all I mean to say is that we can't get in, and that there will be no divine service for its to-night—for us who have toiled six days making shoes and coats—who have spent the whole week brewing and baking and butchering for the reverend clergy in order that the said clergy might have strength enough on the seventh day to celebrate divine service for its. Of course, I am not at all saying this in reproach of the right reverend members of this Chapter; for they, too, are nothing but human beings, you know, and it was only the Lord who could stand working six days and be satisfied with resting on the seventh.

Townsman. You're blaspheming God, master townsman!

Gert. Well, He can't hear it when the door is closed.

A Woman. Jesu Maria! He's an Antichrist!

Gert (beating at the door). Do you hear how hollow it sounds?—It is writ in the Bible that once upon a time the veil before the Holiest of Holies was rent in twain, and it must be true—but nothing is said in the Bible about the clerical gentlemen having sewed the veil together again, which, of course, is no reason why it shouldn't have been done.

(The crowd makes a rush at Gert; the children begin to cry.)

Townsman. Out on you, Luther! For that's what you are. We have sinned, and for

that reason the Lord has closed His house. Can't you hear that the very children cry out at the sight of you, unclean spirit that you are?

Gert. Naturally, when you step on their toes, my dear friends—

Woman. Don't go near him! He has a devil!

Townsman. Down with him! Down with him!

Gert. Don't touch me, for here I am under the protection of the Lord.

Townsman. The Lord will not protect the angel that was cast out.

Gert. If the Lord won't, the Holy Church will, and I am now within her consecrated walls.

Townsman. Get him away from the church wall!

Gert. If you don't fear God, you must at least fear the ban of the Holy Father.

Woman. Drag him away from that door! It is his unclean spirit that has cast a spell on the church.

Townsman. That's it! The Lord won't open His church to the Devil.

(The crowd is rushing at Gert again, when the Bishop's Secretary enters, preceded by a verger, who calls upon the people to attend.)

Secretary (reading). "Whereas our cathedral city has failed in the payment of its tithes to this See, and whereas it continues refractory in regard to such payments, the Chapter has deemed it necessary, in accordance with its vested rights and the sanction granted by the Holy Curia, to close the doors of the church and to discontinue all masses and sacrifices until the aforesaid dereliction shall have been duly remedied; failure to observe which shall be at the risk of our displeasure. Datum vigilia assumptionis Mariae. Chapter of Strängnäs." [Exit.]

Gert. What do you say to that, good folk?

Townsman. No mass on Whitsun Eve? That's a shame!

Gert. Take care! Say nothing evil of the priests; maybe they're not to blame.

Townsman. Who is to blame, then?

Gert. The Church! That invisible and omnipotent something! It is the Church, you see, that has closed the church. (The crowd gives evidence of disapproval.)

Olof (who in the meantime has come forward, seizes a rope hanging from the bell tower, and begins to ring vespers). If your worship be seriously meant, I'll say mass for you.

Townsman. Many thanks, Master Olof, but are you aware of what that may lead to?

Olof. Let us fear the Lord more than men! (The crowd kneels.) Dear friends! Brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus! As we are now come together here—

Townsman. Master Olof—

Olof. What is it?

Townsman. We want a real mass, and not any new inventions of men.

Gert. It has to be in Latin, my dear Master Olof, or we can't understand what you say.

Townsman. It has to be in the sacred tongue—or anybody might say mass.

Olof. And so you shall! Everyone for himself, with God!

Crowd. A Luther! A Luther! Antichrist!

Townsman. Well, well, Master Olof, have you, too, so young and zealous, become tainted by the German devil? I am an old man, who has seen much of the world, and I mean well by you—Turn back while you are still young!—Do as we ask you and give us the old mass.

Olof. No, there must be an end to that mummery. Ye shall pray in spirit and in truth, and not in words ye do not understand.

Townsman. Don't you think, my young friend, that the Lord understands Latin?

Gert. But Swedish He doesn't understand at all!

Townsman. Master Olof, are you going to let the people depart from you without a word to edify them? Can't you see how they are yearning for their God? Make a sacrifice of your own sinful will, and don't let the people go from you like sheep that have no shepherd.

Olof. You call my will sinful?

Townsman. You are a hard man!

Olof. Say not so! Do you know what the ringing of this bell will cost me?

Townsman. Your vanity.

Gert. And your peace! For it was the alarum bell that rang in the battle. Hey-ho, this is the start! Soon the bells of Stockholm will respond, and then the blood of Hus, and of Ziska, and of all the thousands of peasants will be on the heads of the princes and the papists.

Woman. Woe unto us! What is he raving about?

Townsman. Do you know this man, Master Olof?

Olof. No.

Gert. Yes, Olof, you know me. Deny me not! Are you afraid of these miserable creatures who do not want their own welfare—and who have never heard the word "freedom"?

Olof. What is your name?

Gert. If I told, you would all tremble. Yet you must tremble in order that you may wake out of your sleep. I am named the angel that was cast out and that is to come again ten thousand times; I am named the liberator that came too early; I am named Satan because I love you more than my own life; I have been named Luther; I have been named Hus. Now I am named Anabaptist!

Crowd (shrink back and begin to cross themselves). Anabaptist!

Gert (removing his disguise and revealing himself as much older than he had seemed). Do you know me now, Olof?

Olof. Father Gert!

Townsman. He calls him father!

Crowd (drawing back from Olof and Gert). Anabaptist! Anabaptist!

Woman. Don't you see, it's he who was put under the ban—

Townsman. Gert the Printer—the bishop's printer—

Another Townsman. The man who printed Luther!

Woman. Woe unto us and to our city! Woe to our priests when they bear company with Antichrist!

Townsman. He denies the holy baptism!

Woman. He denies God. (The crowd disperses.)

Olof. That was dangerous talk, Father Gert.

Gert. You really think it was dangerous, Olof? Bless you for those words!

Olof. Dangerous for you, I mean.

Gert. Not for any one else?

Olof. Let us hope not.

Gert. You have known Luther?

Olof. Indeed, I have! And now I want to carry out his work in my own country.

Gert. Is that all?

Olof. What do you mean?

Gert. It is not enough! Luther is dead. He made a beginning, we have to go on.

Olof. Whither do you want to lead me?

Gert. Far, Olof, very far!

Olof. I am afraid of you, Father Gert.

Gert. Yes, and will be more so; for I shall take you up on a high mountain, and from there you shall overlook the whole world. You see, Olof, it is now Whitsuntide; it was at this time the Holy Ghost came down and filled the Apostles—nay, all humanity. The spirit of the Lord has descended upon me. I feel it, and for that reason they shut me up like one demented. But now I am free again, and now I shall speak the word; for now, Olof, we are standing on the mountain. Behold the people crawling on their knees before those two men seated on their thrones. The taller holds two keys in one hand and a thunderbolt in the other. That is the Pope. Now he hurls his thunderbolt, and a thousand souls pass into perdition, while the rest kiss his foot and sing Gloria Deo—but he who is seated on the throne turns about and smiles. Now behold his companion. He has a sword and at sceptre. Bow down before the sceptre, lest the sword smite you. When he knits his brows all the people tremble. (He turns toward the man on the other throne, and both smile.) They are two pillars of Baal. Then is heard a sound out of heaven as of a host muttering. "Who is grumbling?" exclaims the Pope, shaking his thunderbolt. "Who is muttering?"—and the Emperor shakes his sword. Nobody answers, but still there is grumbling in the air, and roaring, and a cry of "Think!" The Pope cowers, and the Emperor, turning pale, demands: "Who was it that cried 'Think'? Bring him here, and I will take his life!" The Pope shouts: "Bring him here, and I will take his soul!" The cry came out of heaven, and was uttered by no one. But still the sound of it rises; a storm wind springs up; it sweeps over the Alps and goes roaring across Fichtelgebirge; it stirs up the Baltic and echoes from the shores, and the cry is repeated a thousand times all over the world: "Freedom, freedom!" The Pope throws his keys into the sea, and the Emperor sheathes his sword, for against that cry they avail nothing.—Oh, Olof, you wish to smite the Pope, but you forget the Emperor—the Emperor, who is killing his people without counting them because they dare to sigh when he tramples on their chests. You want to smite the Pope at

Rome, but, like Luther, you want to give them a new pope in Holy Writ. Listen! Listen! Bind not the spirits with any fetters whatsoever! Forget not the great Whitsunday! Forget not your great goal: spiritual life and spiritual freedom! Listen not to the cry of death: "And behold, it is all good!" For then the millennium, the kingdom of liberty, will never arrive—and it is that which is now beginning. (Olof remains silent.) Does it make you dizzy?

Olof. You go too far, Gert.

Gert. The day shall come when they will call me papist. Aim at the sky, and you will hit the forest line ahead of you.

Olof. Turn back, Gert! You'll bring disaster on yourself and on the realm. Can't you see how the country is still shivering with the wound-fever caused by the last war? And you wish to sow the seeds of civil war. It is a godless deed!

Gert. No, the knife is in the flesh now. Cut away, and the body may be saved.

Olof. I'll denounce you as a traitor to your country.

Gert. You had better not, seeing that to-day you have offended the Church beyond repair. Besides—

Olof. Speak out, Gert. Just now you look like Satan himself!

Gert. You shall have my secret: deal with it to suit yourself. The King leaves for Malmö to-day, and the day after to-morrow, perchance, Stockholm may be in open revolt.

Olof. What are you talking about?

Gert. Do you know Rink and Knipperdollink?

Olof (alarmed). The Anabaptists!

Gert. Yes. What's so startling in that? They are nothing but a couple of lubberly tradesmen. A furrier and a grocer, who deny the use of baptizing unconscious children, and who are simple-minded enough to oppose the forcing of irrational

creatures into deliberate perjury.

Olof. That is not all.

Gert. What is it, then?

Olof. They are possessed.

Gert. Of the spirit, yes. It is the storm wind that is crying through them. Beware, if you get into its path!

Olof. This must be stopped. I am going to the King.

Gert. We should be friends, Olof. Your mother is living in Stockholm, isn't she?

Olof. You know it, then?

Gert. Do you know that my daughter Christine is with your mother?

Olof. Christine?

Gert. Yes, for the present. If we win, your mother will be protected for my daughter's sake; and if the Catholics win, my daughter will be protected for your mother's sake. You are a little concerned about Christine, are you not?

Olof. Gert, Gert, what made you so wise?

Gert. The madhouse.

Olof. Go away from me! You'll lead me into disaster.

Gert. Yes, if you call it a disaster to be robbed of all earthly happiness, to be dragged into prison, to suffer poverty, to be scorned and reviled fur the sake of truth. If so, you are not worthy of such a splendid disaster. I thought you would understand me, I counted on your help, for in you the fire is still burning, but I see that the world is tempting you. Well, follow the stream and be happy!

Olof. How could a man make over the age in which he is living?

Gert. That's what Luther has done.

Olof. How can one man check a stream?

Gert. Guide it, you fool—for we are the stream. The old are stagnant mudpools, you don't need to check them, but don't let them rot away or dry up; give them an outlet, and they'll flow with the stream, too.

Olof. Yes, I understand you! You have bred a thought in my soul, but that thought must be strangled in its birth, or it will kill me.

Gert. Believe me, you will be a Daniel, and you will speak the truth unto princes, and they will conspire to take your life; but the Lord will protect you.—Now I can safely leave, for I see lightnings flash from your eyes and tongues of fire flickering over your head. (As he is leaving.) There comes the Lord of Flies: don't let him defile your pure soul also.

Olof. Jesus help me!

[Enter Bishop Brask and Bishop Sommar. Sommar approaches Olof, while Brask remains behind, studying the surroundings.]

Sommar. Who rang vespers, Canonicus?

Olof (calmly but firmly). I did.

Sommar. Didn't you know the order?

Olof. I was aware of the prohibition.

Sommar. And you dared to defy it?

Olof. Yes, when the people were let go like sheep without a shepherd, I wanted to keep them together.

Sommar. You seem to be finding fault with our actions. That's impudence indeed.

Olof. Truth is always impudent.

Sommar. I believe, young man, that you want to play the part of an apostle of truth. It will bring you no thanks.

Olof. All I ask is ingratitude.

Sommar. Save your truths. They don't retain their value in the market very long.

Olof (impetuously). That's advice worthy of the Father of Lies!—(Mildly.) I ask your pardon!

Sommar. Do you know to whom you are talking?

Olof (heatedly). To servus servi servorum Måns Sommar!

Brask (stepping forward). Who is this man?

Sommar. One of the attendants in the church.

Brask. What's his name?

Sommar. Olof Pedersson, alias Olaus Petri.

Brask (staring hard at Olof). So you are Master Olof? (Olof bows and looks fixedly at Brask.) I like you. Would you care to become my secretary?

Olof. Many thanks, Your Grace, but I have no recommendations.

Brask. What have you to say, Bishop Måns?

Sommar. He is said to have found much favor with Dr. Luther.

Brask. So I've heard. Nothing but youthful spirits. We'll train him.

Olof. I fear it is too late!

Brask. A sapling can be bent.

Sommar. It is not wise to raise vipers, Your Grace. Our canonicus here has strong leanings toward heresy, and to-day he has dared to defy our orders.

Brask. Is that so?

Sommar. On fully legal grounds we have proclaimed an interdict, and this man has ventured to say mass—worse than that, he has said a Lutheran mass, and thus stirred up the people.

Brask. Take care, young man! Don't you know that the ban will fall on anybody who proclaims Luther?

Olof. I know it, but I fear no other god than God.

Brask. Consider your words. I mean well by you, and you repel me.

Olof. You want to purchase my ability for the doctoring of your sick cause, and I am shameless enough not to sell myself.

Brask. By Saint George, I think you are out of your senses!

Olof. If so, don't give me the same treatment as Gert the Printer. You put him in a madhouse, and it made him too wise, I fear.

Brask (to Bishop Sommar). Do you know Gert?

Sommar. No, Your Grace.

Brask. He's a lunatic who used my press to print Lutheran writings in place of the anti-Lutheran stuff I put into his hands. Moreover, he was dreaming of the Apocalypse and the Millennium. (To Olof.) Have you seen him?

Olof. He was here awhile ago, and you can expect but little good of him.

Brask. Is he at large?

Olof. He'll be in Stockholm soon, and from there you'll hear of him, I think. Take care, my Lord Bishop!

Brask. Ho, there is nothing to fear yet.

Olof. The Anabaptists are in Stockholm.

Brask. What do you say?

Olof. The Anabaptists are in Stockholm!

Brask. The Anabaptists?

[Enter Gustaf Vasa suddenly.]

Gustaf. What's up? The city is in a tumult, the people are marching through the streets crying for the mass. What's the meaning of all this?

Brask. Mischief, Your Highness.

Gustaf. Bishop Måns!

Sommar. The city has failed to pay its tithes.

Gustaf. And for that reason you refuse to hold divine service? 'Sdeath!

Brask. Your Highness ought to remember—

Gustaf. Answer me, Bishop Malls!

Sommar. Your Highness ought to remember that matters like these, which fall within the jurisdiction of the Church—

Gustaf. I command you to attend to your duties!

Brask. The Bishops of Sweden take no orders except from their superiors, the Pope and the Canon Law.

Gustaf (checked). I know, but if the Pope cannot always keep an eye on them?

Brask. That's our concern.

Gustaf (flares up, but controls himself at once). Your Grace is right. It will remain your concern.

Brask. To change the subject—Stockholm is about to rise in rebellion.

Gustaf. Who says so?

Sommar. Our canonicus here.

Gustaf. Your schoolmaster? Where is he? Oh, is it you? What's your name?

Olof. Olof Pedersson.

Gustaf. Master Olof! They tell the you are a heretic, and that you are scheming against Holy Church! That's a perilous venture!

Brask. This very day he has dropped his mask by daring to show open defiance of the Chapter's prohibition against services, and for that reason we demand that Your Highness consent to have him duly punished.

Gustaf. That's a matter for the Chapter and does not concern me. (To Olof.) But

what was that you had to say about a rebellion at Stockholm?

Olof. The Anabaptists!

Gustaf. Is that all?

Brask. Does not Your Highness know how those madmen have been carrying on in Germany? We suggest that Your Highness return to the city in person with your armed force.

Gustaf. That's a matter in which I suit myself!

Brask. But civil war—

Gustaf. That's my concern! (To Olof.) Olof, I appoint you to the clerkship of our court-house at Stockholm. Get over there at once. Speak to the people. I put my trust in you!

Brask. For the country's sake I ask Your Highness to consider the futility of wasting speech on madmen.

Gustaf. Souls are not controlled by swords. Bear that in mind, Your Lordships.

Brask. The Church has never—

Gustaf. Nor by keys! (To Olof.) Go to my chancellor, and he will give you your appointment.

Brask. You had better wait a moment, canonicus.

Gustaf. Our secretary will not put your orders ahead of mine.

Brask. The rights of the Church must be assured first of all. Olof Pedersson—

Gustaf (correcting him). Secretary—

Brask. Secretary Olof Pedersson cannot leave this city until the Chapter has pronounced its verdict.

Gustaf. The Chapter must try the case before it can pronounce a verdict.

Brask. That's our concern.

Gustaf. It is not your concern, Bishop Brask. The Bishop of Linköping cannot sit in judgment on a canonicus at Strängnäs. Speak for yourself, Bishop Sommar.

Sommar. After what has just occurred—h'm!

Brask. All further arguments would seem superfluous.

Gustaf. You had better be silent, Bishop Brask, or leave us, as I am talking privately to Bishop Sommar—privately!—Well, speak up, Bishop Måns!

Sommar. I cannot see but—that—as His Grace, the Bishop of Linköping—

Gustaf. We are talking of Master Olof now. Your Lordships will have to postpone the trial. Be kind enough to leave us.

[Exeunt Bishops.]

Gustaf (to Olof). Will you be my man?

Olof. Your Highness' secretary?

Gustaf. No, my right hand—on the condition that for the present the left hand shall not know what the right is doing. Go to Stockholm.

Olof. The Chapter will demand my surrender and ban me.

Gustaf. Before they get to that point you may fall back on me, but until then—stand on your own feet as far as you can.

Olof. What is Your Highness' will?

Gustaf. Talk to those fanatics in Stockholm.

Olof. And then?

Gustaf. Oh, that's a long way off. I don't dare to think so far yet.—Let them preach. It can't hurt those sottish spirits to hear a new word, even if it be not all true. But there must be no violence; for then the sword will join in the game. Farewell, Olof! [Exit.]

Olof (alone). So the Emperor won't be friends with the Pope!

(The two scholars, who have been waiting among the trees in the background, come forward.)

First Scholar. Shall we go on with the play, Master Olof?

Olof. No, children, there will be no more playing.

First Scholar. Are you going to leave us, Master Olof?

Olof. Yes, and probably forever.

First Scholar. Can't you stay over Whitsuntide, so that we can perform our comedy?

Second Scholar. And so that I can play the Angel Gabriel?

First Scholar. Please do as we ask you, Master Olof! You are the only one who has been nice to us and spared us those terrible fasts.

Second Scholar. Oh, don't go away from us, Master Olof!

Olof. You don't know what you are asking, children. The day will come when you shall thank the Lord that I did go away from you.—Oh, no, I hope such a day will never come!—But let us make our leave-taking brief. Good-bye, Nils! Good-bye, Vilhelm!

(He embraces them, and they kiss his hand. In the meantime Lars Andersson has entered and is watching the group closely.)

First Scholar. Won't you ever come back, Master Olof?

Lars (coming forward). Are you ready to start now?

Olof (to the scholars). No, I shall never come back.

Scholars (as they go out). Good-bye, Master Olof, and don't forget us! (Olof stands looking after them.)

Lars. I have seen the King.

Olof (absent-mindedly). Have you?

Lars. Do you know what he said?

Olof. No.

Lars. "I have got a harrier to raise the game; now it remains to be seen whether he will come back when I whistle for him!"

Olof. Look at them—playing there among the graves, and picking flowers, and singing the songs of Whitsuntide.

Lars (taking hold of Olof's arm). Child!

Olof (with a start). What did you say?

Lars. I thought you had laid your hand so firmly on the plough handle to-day that there could be no question of looking back. (Olof waves his hand to the scholars.) Are you still dreaming?

Olof. It was the last bright morning dream that passed away from me. Pardon me—I am awake now!

[Exeunt toward the right. Then they are nearly out, Olof turns for a last look at the scholars. These have disappeared in the meantime, and in their place appear the two Black Friars, Mårten and Nils. On seeing them, Olof utters a startled cry and puts one hand to his forehead. Lars drags him out.]

ACT II

SCENE 1

(A Room in the Foundation Wall of the Church of St. Nicolaus at Stockholm (generally known as Greatchurch), used as a beer-shop. A bar full of pots and mugs occupies the background. To the right of the bar stands a table, back of which appears an iron door. Two disguised friars (Mårten and Nils) are seated at this table drinking beer. The other tables are surrounded by German mercenaries, peasants, and sailors. The door to the street is at the right. A fiddler is seated on top of a barrel. The soldiers are throwing dice. All are drunk and noisy. Hans Windrank, a

man from Småland, a German tradesman, and a Dane are seated together at one of the tables.)

German (to the Dane). So you defend a bloodthirsty brute like Christian?

Dane. Oh, mercy, he's human, isn't he?

German. Not, he's a monster! A bloodthirsty brute! A treacherous, cowardly Dane!

Dane. Zounds! But you'd better not talk of blood. Do you remember the massacre on Käppling Island, when the Germans—

Windrank. Listen to me, good Sirs! Let's be friends now, and have some fun, and I'll tell you about Americky.

German. Are you going to blame us of Lübeck for what the Germans did?

Dane. Oh, mercy, I was talking of the Germans only—

Windrank. Listen, good Sirs, what's the use of quarrelling? (To the Tavern-keeper.) Four noggins of gin! Now let's be calm and agreeable, and I'll tell you of Americky. (They are served.)

German (sipping). A noble drink! Think of it, good Sirs, how everything is advancing. To-day the grain is growing in the field—

Windrank. And to-morrow it's made into wine. I wonder who first found out how it's done?

German. Beg your pardon, but that's a German invention. I call it invention, because you discover Americky.

Windrank. And the Germans never make any discoveries?

German. 'Sdeath!

Windrank. Now, now! You're no German, you said.

Dane (to the German). Can you tell the who invented the story that the Swedes got their present king from the Germans? (General laughter.)

German. It was we of Lübeck what gave Sweden a liberator when she was on the verge of ruin.

Windrank. Here's to the King!

Dane. Here's to Lübeck!

German (flattered). Really I don't know how to—

Windrank. Why, you aren't the King!

German. Beg your pardon, but it was my Danish brother's—

Dane. How can you be of Lübeck when you are a citizen of Stockholm?

Windrank (to the Man from Småland). Why won't our silent brother drink at all?

Man from Småland. I'll drink your corn-juice, but when it comes to the King's health, I do like this! (He crushes the tin cup and throws it on the floor.)

Windrank (groping with one hand for his sheath knife.) You won't drink the King's health?

Man from Småland. I've been drinking the cup he offered me so long that I don't care to drink his health any longer.

Windrank. 'Sblood!

German (eagerly). Hush, hush! Let's hear what he's got to say.

Dane (in the same way). Mercy, yes!

A Man from Småland. The Lord help me when I get home again!

Windrank (sentimentally). What is it, my dear man? Why do you look so sad? Do you need money? Look here, now! (He pulls out his purse.) I've half my wages left. What's the matter with you?

Man from Småland. Don't let us talk about it. More gin! Gin here! I've money, too. Do you see? Gold! (The liquor is served). It isn't mine, but I'll spend it on drink to the last farthing, and you'll please help me.

Windrank. And yet it isn't your money—how can you do that?

German. Who's wronged you, my dear fellow? I can see that you have fared badly.

A Man from Småland I am ruined! You see, I got two hundred oxen on trust, and when I came to Stockholm the King's agent took charge of the whole business, and he said I couldn't sell them for more than he allowed. It's the King that fixes the price on oxen—it's the King that has ruined me.

German. You don't say!

Man from Småland. Oh, I know a lot more. He means to take the priests and the monks away from us in order to give everything to the gentlefolk.

Dane. To the gentlefolk?

Man from Småland. Exactly! I wish King Christian—God bless him!—had cut off a few more heads.

Windrank. Well, is the King like that? I thought he had those noble fellows by the ear.

Man from Småland. He? No, he lets them be born with the right to cut oak on my ground, if I had any. For I did have a patch of land once, you see, but then came a lord who said that my great-grandmother had taken it all in loan from his great-grandfather, and so there was an end to that story.

German. Why, is the King like that? I would never have believed it.

Man from Småland. Indeed he is! Those high-born brats run around with their guns in our woods and pick off the deer out of sheer mischief, but if one of us peasants were dying from hunger and took a shot at one of the beasts—well, then he wouldn't have to starve to death, for they'd hang him—but not to an oak—Lord, no! That would be a shame for such a royal tree. No, just to an ordinary pine. The pine, you see, has no crown, and that's why it isn't royal—and that's why the old song says:

The peasants we hanged in lines From the tops of the tallest pities.

It has nothing to say about crowns, mind you.

German. But the pine carries its head high just the same, and its back is straight.

Man from Småland. Drink, good Sirs! You're right welcome to 't. It's a blessed drink. If only I didn't have wife and children at home! Oh, my, my, my! But that's all one! Oh, I know a lot more, but I know how to keep it to myself, too.

Windrank. What do you know?

German. Maybe it's something diverting?

Man from Småland. You see—if you counted all the pines of Småland, I think you'd find a whole lot more of them than of oaks.

German. You think so?

Windrank. I don't like you to talk badly of the King. I don't know what he is doing or saying, and it isn't my business either, but I know he takes good care of the shipping trade. Yes, it's he who has put ships on the Spanish trade, and who has made me a skipper, and so I've got no fault to find with him.

German. He has done it out of sheer deviltry, just to hurt the trade of Lübeck—of Lübeck, to which he owes such a great debt!

Man from Småland. Well, he'll get what he deserves! A steer doesn't lose his horns when you make an ox of him. Many thanks for your company. Now I've got to go.

German. Oh, no! Just one more noggin—and then we can talk a little more.

Man from Småland. No, thanks, though I'm sure it's good of you, but that's all I dare take, for otherwise I fear this will end badly. I've wife and children at home, you see, and now I'm going home—to tell them we're ruined—no—I don't dare to—I'm much obliged, Mr. German—let's drink some more.

German. That's right! (They drink.)

Man from Småland (emptying his cup and jumping up). Oh, damn the bitter stuff! [Exit, staggering.]

German (to the Dane). O Lord—when that fellow wakes up!

(The Dane nods assent. The noise has been steadily increasing. The fiddler is playing. Then the organ begins to play in the church.)

Windrank. It's strange, I think, that the King lets them have a drinkshop in the church wall.

German. Does it hurt your conscience, skipper? The King doesn't know it, you see.

Windrank. But they don't go together, the organ music and the singing in here. I've always been a God-fearing man, ever since I was at home.

German (ironically). Happy the man brought up in that way! You had a mother—

Windrank (moved). Yes—yes!

German. Who tucked you up nights and taught you to say: "Now I lay me down to sleep."

Windrank. That's it!

German. And a fine woman she was!

Windrank (on whom the drink is beginning to show its effect.) Oh, if you only knew!

German. The Lord has heard her prayers. You're weeping. So you must be a good man.

Dane. Dear me!

German. If your mother could only see you now—with those tears in your eyes!

Windrank. Oh, I know I'm a poor miserable sinner—I know it! But I tell you—I've got a heart, damn it! Just let a poor wretch come and tell me he is hungry, and I'll take off my own shirt and give it to him.

German. How about another drink?

Windrank. No, I don't think so.

(Several blows are struck on the iron door from the outside, causing general excitement.)

Windrank. God-a-mercy!

German. Don't get scared. That's not the gate of heaven.

Windrank. I'll never drink another drop—I vow and swear!

German (to the Dane). What a blessed drink gin must be, seeing it can move a rogue like that to sentimentality—nay, even to thoughts of sobriety.

Dane. You're right. There is nothing like it.

German. It opens the heart wide and closes the head. Which means that it makes good people of us, for those are called good, you know, who have much heart and little head.

Dane. I'd go still farther. Gin makes us religious. For it kills reason, and reason is the rock that keeps religion from entering our hearts.

German. Most holy is gin! Strange that—

Dane. You need say no more!

(More blows are struck on the iron door.)

Windrank (who has fallen asleep, is awakened by the blows). Help! I die!

German. What a pity to lose such a sweet soul!

(The door is pushed open so that the table at which Mårten and Nils are seated is upset together with the mugs and cups on it. A woman wearing a red and black skirt, with a nun's veil thrown over her head, comes running into the room. For a moment Gert can be seen in the doorway behind her, but the door is immediately closed again.)

Harlot (with a startled glance at her surroundings). Save me! The people want to kill me!

A German Mercenary. A harlot under a nun's veil! Ha-ha-ha! (General laughter.)

Mårten (making the sign of the cross). A harlot! Who dares to bring her into this respectable company? Master taverner, take her out of here, or she'll hurt the good name of the place and the sanctity of the church.

Harlot. Will nobody here save me? (In the meantime the tavern-keeper has seized her by the arm to lead her into the street.) Don't give me into the hands of that furious mob! I wanted to steal into the Lord's house that I might share in His grace—I wanted to start a new life—but the monks drove me out and set the people on me—until Father Gert came and saved me.

Mårten. You can hear for yourselves. She has polluted the Lord's temple. She wants to hide the garment of shame beneath the veil of sanctity.

German. And there isn't enough of the veil.

Mårten (approaching the woman to tear the veil from her face). Off with the mask, and let your abomination be seen by all! (He draws back when he catches sight of her face.)

Harlot. So it's you, Mårten—you murderer!

German. Old chums!

Mårten. That's a shameless lie! I never have seen her before. I am Brother Mårten, of the Dominicans, and Brother Nils here can be my witness.

Nils (intoxicated). I can testify—that Brother Mårten has never seen this woman.

Harlot. And yet it was you, Nils, who showed me Mårten's letter of absolution when I was driven out of the convent and he was permitted to stay.

Nils. Yes—come to think of it!

Mårten (in a rage, pulling Nils by the sleeve). You're lying—you, too! Can't you see he is drunk?

German. My dear folks, I can testify that the reverend brother is drunk, and that's

why he is lying!

Crowd (with signs of disgust). A drunken priest!

German. Well, booze is absolution for lying. Isn't that so, Father Mårten?

Tavern-keeper. Really, I can't let my house be the meeting-place for any kind of disturbance. If this goes on, I'll lose my customers and get hauled before the Chapter. Won't you please take away that miserable creature who's causing all this noise?

Mårten. Take her out, or I'll have you all banned! Don't you know that we are now within the consecrated walls of the church, although the Chapter allows this outhouse to be used for the material refreshment of travellers?

German. Surely this room is holy, good folk, and surely the Lord doth dwell here.

(The crowd begins to drag the Harlot toward the street door.)

Harlot. Jesus Christ, help me!

[Enter Olof. He appears in the door, and pushes through the crowd until he reaches the Harlot, whose hand he takes so that he can pull her away from the drunken men about her.]

Olof. Answer me—who is this woman?

Mårten. She's no woman.

Olof. What do you mean?

Mårten. She is no man either, although she's disguised.

Olof. "She," you say—and yet not a woman?

Mårten. She's a harlot.

Olof (shocked, drops the woman's hand). A harlot!

German. Don't let go of her, Master Olof, or she'll run away.

Olof. Why are you laying hands on her? What is her crime?

German. Going to church.

Olof. I see! (He looks around.)

Mårten. What are you looking for?

Olof (catching sight of Mårten). A priest!

Mårten. I am a Black Friar.

Olof. Yes, I guessed that much. So it's you who have incited the people against her?

Mårten. I am protecting the church from foulness and trying to keep it free of vice. She is a banned woman, who has been trafficking with her own body, which should be a temple of the Lord. (The woman kneels before Olof.)

Olof (taking her by the hand). But I, Dominican, dare to take her hand and match her against you. She has sold her body, you say—how many souls have you bought?—I am also a priest—Nay, I am a man, for I am not presumptuous enough to put a lock on God's own house, and as a sinful human creature I hold out my hand to my fellow-creature, who cannot be pure either. Let him who is without sin step forward and cast the first stone.—Step forward, Brother Mårten, you angel of light, who have donned the black garments of innocence and shaved your hair so that no one may see how you have grown gray in sin! Or have you no stone ready, perhaps? Alas for you, then! What have you done with those you were to hand the people when they were crying for bread? Have you already given them all away?—Step forward, you highly respectable citizen. (To Windrank, who is asleep on the floor.) You, who are sleeping the sleep of a brute, why don't you wake up and fling your knife at her?—Do you see how he is blushing? Can it be from shame at the bad company you have brought him into, or from carnal desire? (The crowd mutters disapprovingly.) You are muttering! Is that because you are ashamed of my words or of yourselves? Why don't you cast the stones? Oh, you haven't any. Well, open that door. Summon the people outside and hand this woman over to them. If you don't think fifty men have power enough to tear her to pieces, you maybe sure that five

hundred women will avail. Well? You are silent?—Rise up, woman! You have been acquitted. Go and sin no more. But don't show yourself to the priests, for they will deliver you up to the women!

Mårten (who has tried to interrupt Olof several times, but has been held back by the German, now displays a document). This man, to whom you have been listening, is a heretic, as you may have heard from his talk, and he has also been t excommunicated. Here you can see! Read for yourselves! (He takes one of the candles from the nearest table and throws it on the floor.) "As this candle, that we here cast out, is extinguished, so shall be extinguished all his happiness and weal and whatsoever good may come to him from God!"

Crowd (draws back, making the sign of the cross, so that Olof is left alone with the Harlot in the middle of the room). Anathema!

Mårten (to the Harlot). There you can hear how much Master Olof's absolution avails you.

Olof (who has been taken aback for a moment). Do you still dare to trust my word, woman? Are you not afraid of me? Can you not hear the lightnings of the ban hissing around our heads? Why don't you join these twenty righteous ones who still remain within the refuge of Holy Church?—Answer me! Do you think the Lord has cast me out as these have done?

Harlot. No!

Olof (seizing the letter of excommunication). Well, then! The great bishop of the small city of Linköping has sold my soul to Satan for the term of my life—for farther than that his power does not reach—and he has done so because I bade the people seek their Lord when they had been prohibited from doing so! Here is the contract! As the Church, by that contract, has bound me to hell, so I set myself free from it (he tears the letter to pieces)—and from the ban of the Church, too! So help me God! Amen!

Crowd (howling). Anathema!

Mårten. Down with him! At him! He is banned!

Olof (placing himself in front of the Harlot). Do you hear the devils yelling for their victim?—Dare not to touch me!

Mårten. At him! Down with him!

[Just as one of the mercenaries raises his weapon to strike, the iron door in the rear is flung open, and the Anabaptists, headed by Knipperdollink, come rushing in, uttering wild cries. They carry broken crucifixes and images of saints as well as torn vestments. All those in the room before are forced toward the street door.]

Knipperdollink (as he pushes back the iron door and enters ahead of the rest). Come here, folk—here's another sanctum!—What's this? A drinkshop in the temple!—Look ye! Look ye—the abomination has gone so far that the tabernacle itself is being polluted. But I will cleanse it with fire. Set fire to the church and prepare a stake for the saints!

Olof (stepping forward). Consider what you propose to do!

Knipperdollink. Are you afraid that the beer kegs will burst from the heat, you Belial? Are you the popish tapster who thought it not robbery to build vice a chapel in the very wall of the church?

Olof. I am the Secretary of the Court-House, and I command you in the name of the King to keep order!

Knipperdollink. So you are the man whom the King has sent here to make war on our sacred cause? Onward, onward, ye men of God, and seize him first of all! Afterwards we'll cleanse the temple of the Lord from idolatry.

Mårten. Go at him, good folk, for he's a heretic and under the ban!

Knipperdollink. A heretic? You are not one of the papists, then?

Olof. Since they have banned me, I can no longer be of the Church.

Knipperdollink. Then you are on our side? (Olof remains silent.) Answer: are you with us or against us?

Mårten. He's Olof Pedersson, the man that was sent here by the King.

Knipperdollink. Are you Olof Pedersson?

Olof. I am.

Knipperdollink. But a heretic?

Olof. I pride myself on being one.

Knipperdollink. And yet take service with the King?

Olof. Yes!

(The Anabaptists raise an outcry and surround Olof.)

[Enter Gert quickly through the door in the rear.]

Gert. Hold! What are you doing?

Knipperdollink. Gert!—Who is this man?

Gert. One of our own. Let him go, friends! Over there you see the emissaries of the Devil!

(He points to Mårten and Nils, who flee through the street door, closely pursued by the Anabaptists. At the door Gert stops and turns toward Olof. The Harlot is crouching in a corner of the room. Windrank is still sleeping under one of the tables. Olof is standing in the middle of the floor, sunk in deep thought.)

Gert (exhausted, throws himself on a bench). It's heavy work, Olof.

Olof. What have you been doing?

Gert. Oh, a little house-cleaning, to begin with.

Olof. For which you will pay dearly.

Gert. So far we have the upper hand. The whole city has been roused. Rink is at work in St. George's Chapel. Tell me, has the King sent you to oppose us?

Olof. He has.

Gert. That was a most sensible thing to do!

Olof. To-morrow I am to preach from the new pulpit.

Gert. Do you call this fulfilling your royal mission? Here you are, still standing with your arms folded.

Olof. Come to church to-morrow with your brethren.

Gert. Is it going to be an archipapal sermon?

Olof. I have been put under the ban to-day.

Gert (jumps up and puts his arms around Olof). God bless you, Olof! That is indeed the baptism of new birth!

Olof. I don't understand you yet. Why do you carry on like wild beasts? You seem to be outraging all that is held sacred.

Gert (picking up the broken image of a saint). Do you call this fellow holy? A St. Nicolaus, I think. Can it be possible, then, that Jesus Christ has come down and lived among us to no purpose, as we are still worshipping logs of wood? Can this be a god, which I can break to pieces? See!

Olof. But he is sacred to the people.

Gert. So was the golden calf, and so was Zeus; so were Thor and Odin, too. And yet they were struck down. (Catches sight of the Harlot.) Who's that woman? Oh, the one I tried to save by sending her in here. Tell me one thing, Olof. Have you been bought by the King?

Olof. Leave me, Gert! I hate you!

Gert. Who's that pig asleep over there?

Olof. When I face you, I seem to shrink. Leave me! I want to do my own work, and not yours.

Gert. Listen!

Olof. You are trying to confuse my fate with your own.

Gert. Listen!

Olof. You have surrounded me with an invisible net. You have proclaimed me an Anabaptist. How am I going to face the King?

Gert. Which king?

Olof. King Gustaf!

Gert. Oh, that one!—Well, good-bye, then, Olof.—So you're going to preach to-morrow?—Why doesn't that woman go her way?—Good-bye! [Exit.]

Olof. Is that man running errands for God or for Satan?

Harlot (approaches Olof and kneels before him). Let me thank you!

Olof. Give thanks for God alone for having saved your soul, and don't think that all your sins have been expiated to-day. Try to find strength to live a life that will always be cursed. God has forgiven you—your fellow-men will never do so! (He takes her by the hand and leads her to the street door.)

[Enter Mårten through the doorway in the rear, followed by Olof's Mother and Christine, the daughter of Gert.]

Mårten. We're in the wrong place, I fear.

Mother (outraged at seeing Olof and the Harlot together). Olof, Olof!

Christine. Who is that woman? She looks so unhappy.

Mårten. Let us get away from this den of iniquity!

Olof (turning and running toward the iron door, which is closed in his face by Mårten). Mother! Mother!

[He runs out through the other door.] (The stage is darkened.)

SCENE 2

(The Same Room. The door to the church is opened cautiously, and The Sexton, who is also the organ-blower, enters warily. He carries a lantern and is followed by his Wife.)

Sexton. Catherine dear, will you hold the lantern a moment while I put on the padlock?

Wife. First we must have a look at all this wretchedness, Bengt dear. Never could I have believed that the public-house was so near to us. It's perfectly dreadful! Look—whole barrels full of beer!

Sexton. And gin, too. Don't you smell it? It will give me a headache if I stay much longer.

Wife. Lord have mercy, what a sinful life they must have lived in here!

Sexton. Catherine dear!

Wife. Yes, dear.

Sexton. Do you know I am not feeling quite well. This place is so damp and cold.

Wife. Perhaps we had better go home?

Sexton. Oh, I think I must sit down and rest on the bench here.

Wife. You shouldn't sit down in all this dampness and cold. Let us get back into the church.

Sexton. No, I think it was still colder out there.

Wife. You haven't a fever, have you?

Sexton. I almost think I have—I'm so hot.

Wife. Maybe you want something to drink?

Sexton. That wouldn't be a bad thing, perhaps.

Wife. I'll see if there is any water around.

Sexton. Don't think you'll find any in this kind of a hole.

Wife. But you can't drink beer if you have a fever.

Sexton. Do you know, I think the fever has passed away. Now I'm feeling cold.

Wife. I'll see if I can't find some small beer.

Sexton. It has to be pretty strong, I think, if it's to do any good. There's a keg of Rostock No. 4 over there—marked A. W., don't you see?

Wife (searching). I can't find it. Here's an Amsterdam No. 3.

Sexton. Can't you see—up there on the fourth shelf at the right? (His wife continues to look.) The tap is lying to the left of it, right by the funnel.

Wife. I don't think it's there.

Sexton. Just as if I didn't know!

Wife. Yes, here it is.

(The Sexton gets up to help his wile and accidentally steps on Windrank.)

Windrank (waking up). Mercy! Jesu Christ! St. Peter and St. Paul! Ferdinand and Isabella, and St. George and the Dragon, and all the rest! And ires dire glories in excellence, and deuces tecum vademecum Christ Jesu, and birds of a feather, and now I lay me down to sleep, and a child is born for you to keep—Amen! Amen!—Who's stepping on my windbag?

Sexton (frightened). Will you please tell me whether you are a man or a ghost?

Windrank. Man most of the time, but just now I'm a beast.

Sexton. What kind of a man, if I may ask?

Windrank. A shipman—which is nor reason why you should blow all the wind out of me.

Sexton. But that's my business, you know—I blow the bellows of the big organ.

Windrank. So it was the organ-blower who honored me—

Sexton. The sexton, to put it right; but I also keep an old-clothes shop in the church

wall.

Windrank. So you're organ-blower, sexton, and shopkeeper—

Sexton. In one person—without confusion or transformation—

Windrank. That's a most respectable trinity.

Sexton. Such things should not be made fun of!

Windrank. Oh, my, my! I'm drowning! Help!

Sexton. Lord, what is it?

Windrank. There's a whole river coming—Ugh!

Sexton. Catherine dear! Where are you, my angel? (He runs to look for her.) Jesu, but you must have scared my wife out of her wits. She has run away from the keg—and taken the tap along! Get up—up with you, and let us leave this godless hole!

Windrank. No, my dear fellow, I'm in my element now, so I think I'll stay.

Sexton. Goodness, the clock is striking twelve, and the ghosts will be coming!

Windrank (jumping to his feet). That's a different story! (The Sexton guides Windrank toward the door.) Listen, sexton—I'm beginning to have strong doubts about the trinity.

Sexton. Well, I declare!

Windrank. It's your trinity I'm thinking of.

Sexton. What do you mean, master skipper?

Windrank. I think there must be four of you, after all.

Sexton. Four—of whom?

Windrank. How about the tapster? Shouldn't he be counted, too?

Sexton. Hush, man! That's only nights.

(Both stumble over the broken image of St. Nicolaus and fall down.)

Windrank. Mercy! Ghosts! Jesu Maria, help!

Sexton (rising and picking up the image). Well, if that isn't enough to make your hair stand on end! Here's St. Nicolaus broken all to pieces and swimming in the beer. It has come to a fine pass when divine things are defiled like that—I don't think the world will last much longer—when such things can be done in the dry tree—

Windrank (having recovered). In the wet one, you mean.

Sexton. Keep still, blasphemer! St. Nicolaus is my patron saint. I was born on his day.

Windrank. That's probably why both of you like beer.

Sexton. Yes, it's in the fashion now to be heretical!

Windrank. It's in the air, I think, for otherwise I'm a most God-fearing man. But never mind, I'll have St. Nicolaus glued together for you.

Sexton (calling into the church). Catherine!

Windrank. Hush, hush, man! You'll make the ghosts appear!

Sexton. A plague on your tongue! [Exeunt.]

SCENE 3

(The Sacristy of the Church of St. Nicolaus. There is a door leading to the church, and another, smaller one, leading to the pulpit. The walls are hung with chasubles and surplices. Priedieus and a few small chests are standing about. The sunlight is pouring in through a window. The church bells are heard ringing. Through the wall at the left can be heard a constant murmuring. The Sexton and his Wife enter, stop near the door, and pray silently.)

Sexton. That's enough! Now, Catherine dear, you'd better hurry up and do some dusting.

Wife. Oh, there's no special occasion. It's nobody but that Master Olof who's going

to preach to-day. Really, I can't see why the Chapter allows it.

Sexton. Because he's got permission from the King, you see.

Wife. Well, well!

Sexton. And then he has had a sort of basket built out from the wall—nothing but new-fangled tricks! It's all on account of that man Luther.

Wife. I suppose we'll have the same kind of trouble that we had yesterday. I thought they were going to pull the whole church down.

Sexton (carrying a glass of water up to the pulpit). I'm sure the poor fellow will need something to wet his whistle to-day.

Wife. Well, I shouldn't bother, if I were you.

Sexton (speaking from the pulpit). Catherine—here he comes!

Wife. Goodness gracious, and the sermon bell hasn't rung yet! Well, I suppose they won't ring it for a fellow like him.

[Enter Olof, looking serious and solemn. He crosses to one of the prie-dieus and kneels on it. The Sexton comes down from the pulpit and takes from the wall a surplice which he holds out to Olof.]

Olof (rising). The peace of the Lord be with you!

[The Wife curtseys and leaves the room. The Sexton holds out the vestment again.]

Olof. Leave it hanging!

Sexton. Don't you want any robe?

Olof. No.

Sexton. But it's always used. And the handkerchief?

Olof. Never mind.

Sexton. Well, I declare!

Olof. Will you please leave me alone, my friend?

Sexton. You want me to get out? But as a rule, I—

Olof. Do me the favor, please!

Sexton. Oh, well! Of course! But first I want to tell you that you'll find the missal to the right of you as you get up, and I have put in a stick so you'll know where to open it, and there is a glass of water beside the book. And you mustn't forget to turn the hour-glass, or it may chance you'll keep it up a little too long—

Olof. Don't worry! There will be plenty of people to tell me when to quit.

Sexton. Mercy, yes—beg your pardon! But you see, we've got our own customs here.

Olof. Tell me, what is that depressing murmur we hear?

Sexton. It's some pious brother saying prayers for a poor soul. [Exit.]

Olof. "Thou therefore gird up thy loins and arise, and speak unto them all that I command thee."—God help me! (He drops on his knees at a prie-dieu; there he finds a note, which he reads.) "Don't preach to-day; your life is in danger."—The Tempter himself wrote that! (He tears the note to pieces.)

[Enter Olof's Mother.]

Mother. You are straying from the right path, my son.

Olof. Who knows?

Mother. I know! But as your mother I reach out my hand to you. Turn back!

Olof. Where would you lead me?

Mother. To godliness and virtue.

Olof. If godliness and virtue are vested in papal decrees, then I fear it is too late.

Mother. It isn't only a question of what you teach, but of how you live.

Olof. I know you are thinking of my company last night, but I am too proud to answer you. Nor do I think it would do any good.

Mother. Oh, that I should be thus rewarded for the sacrifice I made when I let you go out into the world and study!

Olof. By heaven, your sacrifice shall not be wasted! It is you, mother, I have to thank for this day when at last I can stand forth with a free countenance and speak the words of truth.

Mother. How can you talk of truth, you who have made yourself a prophet of lies?

Olof. Those are hard words, mother!

Mother. Or perhaps I and my forbears have lived and worshipped and died in a lie?

Olof. It wasn't a lie, but it has become one. When you were young, mother, you were right, and when I grow old—well, perhaps I may find myself in the wrong. One cannot keep apace with the times.

Mother. I don't understand!

Olof. This is my one sorrow—the greatest one of my life: that all I do and say with the purest purpose must appear to you a crime and sacrilege.

Mother. I know what you mean to do, Olof—I know what error you have fallen into—and I cannot hope to persuade you out of it, for you know so much more than I do, and I am sure that the Lord will put you on the right path again—but I ask you to take care of your own life, so that you won't plunge headlong into perdition! Don't risk your life!

Olof. What do you mean? They won't kill me in the pulpit, will they?

Mother. Haven't you heard that Bishop Brask wants the Pope to introduce the law that sends all heretics to the stake?

Olof. The inquisition?

Mother. Yes, that's what they call it.

Olof. Leave me, mother! To-day I must stand up and preach.

Mother. You shall not do it.

Olof. Nothing can prevent me.

Mother. I have prayed to God that He would touch your heart—I'll tell you, but you mustn't speak of it to anybody. I am weak with age, and I couldn't trust my own knees, so I went to see a servant of the Lord and asked him, who is nearer to God, to say some prayers for your soul. He refused because you are under the ban. Oh, it's dreadful! May the Lord forgive me my sin! I bribed the pure conscience of that man with gold—with the Devil's own gold—just to save you!

Olof. Mother, what do I hear? It can't be possible!

Mother (takes Olof by the hand and leads him over to the left, close to the wall). Listen! Do you hear? He is praying for you now in the chapel next to this room.

Olof. So that was the murmur I heard! Who is he?

Mother. You know him—Brother Mårten, of the Dominicans—

Olof. You get Satan to say prayers for me!—Forgive me, mother—I thank you for your good intention, but—

Mother (on her knees, weeping). Olof! Olof!

Olof. Don't ask me! A mother's plea might tempt the angels of heaven to recant!—Now the hymn is ended: I must go! The people are waiting.

Mother. You'll send me into my grave, Olof!

Olof (passionately). The Lord will resurrect you! (Kissing her hand.) Don't talk to me any more—I don't know what I am saying!

Mother. Listen! Listen! The people are muttering!

Olof. I'm coming! I'm coming! He who protected Daniel in the lions' den will also protect me!

(Olof ascends the stairs leading to the pulpit. Throughout the ensuing scenes a man's voice can be heard speaking with great power, but no words can be distinguished. After a while mutterings are heard, which change into loud cries.)

[Enter Christine.]

Christine. Mother, did you see him?

Mother. Are you here, child? I asked you to stay at home!

Christine. Why shouldn't I visit the house of the Lord? There is something you hide from me!

Mother. Go home, Christine!

Christine. May I not hear Olof preach? It's the word of God, isn't it, mother? (The Mother remains silent.) You don't answer? What does it mean? Hasn't Olof permission to preach? Why do the people out there look so mysterious? They were muttering when I came.

Mother. Don't ask me! Go home and thank God for your ignorance!

Christine. Am I a child, then, since nobody dares to tell me—

Mother. Your soul is still pure, and nobody must defile it. What place is there for you in the battle?

Christine. Battle? I thought so!

Mother. Yes, here the battle rages, and so you must get out of the way. You know our lot when the men go to war.

Christine. But let me first know what it is all about. Not to know anything at all makes me so unhappy. I see nothing but a dreadful darkness, and shadows that are moving about—Give me light, so that I may see clearly! Perhaps I know these ghostly shallows?

Mother. You will shudder when you see who they are.

Christine. It is better to shudder than to be tormented by this horrible calm.

Mother. Don't pray for the cloud to flash forth lightning: it may destroy you!

Christine. You frighten me! But tell me the truth—I must know—or I shall ask some

one else.

Mother. Are you firm in your decision to withdraw within the sacred walls of the convent?

Christine. My father wishes it.

Mother. You hesitate? (Christine does not answer.) There is some tie that holds you back.

Christine. You know?

Mother. I know, and tell you to break it!

Christine. It will soon be impossible.

Mother. I will save you, child, for you can still be saved. I will offer the Lord the greatest sacrifice of all if a single soul can be saved from perdition—my son!

Christine. Olof?

Mother. He's lost, I tell you, and I, his mother, have to tell you so!

Christine. Lost?

Mother. He is a prophet of lies. The Devil has taken possession of his soul.

Christine (passionately). It isn't true!

Mother. God grant that you are right!

Christine. Why—why haven't you told me this before?—But, of course, it's a lie! (She goes to the door leading into the church and pushes it ajar.) Look at him, mother—there he is! Can that be an evil spirit speaking out of his mouth? Can that be a hellish flame burning in his eyes? Can lies be told with trembling lips? Does darkness shed light—can't you see the halo about his head? You are wrong! I feel it within me! I don't know what he preaches—I don't know what he denies—but he is right! He is right, and the Lord is with him!

Mother. You don't know the world, my child. You don't know the tricks of the

Devil. Beware! (She pulls Christine away from the door.) You mustn't listen to him. There is no strength in your soul, and he's the apostle of Antichrist!

Christine. Who is Antichrist?

Mother. He is a Luther!

Christine. You have never told me who Luther is, but if Olof is his apostle, then Luther must be a great man.

Mother. Luther is possessed of the Devil!

Christine. Why didn't you tell me before? Now I can't believe you!

Mother. I am telling you now—Alas, I wanted to save you from the world's wickedness, and so I kept you in ignorance—

Christine. I don't believe you! Let me go! I must see him—I must listen to him—for he doesn't talk like the rest.

Mother. Jesus, my Saviour! Are you, too, possessed by the unclean spirit?

Christine (at the door). "Bind not the souls," he said—did you hear? "You are free, for the Lord has set you free." See how the people shudder at his words—now they rise up—they mutter. "You want no freedom—woe unto you! For that is the sin against the Holy Ghost!"

[Enter Sexton.]

Sexton. I don't think it's well for you to stay here any longer, my good ladies. The people are getting restless. This will never end well for Master Olof.

Mother. Jesu Maria! What are you saying?

Christine. Fear not! The spirit of the Lord is with him!

Sexton. Well, I don't know about that, but he's a wonder at preaching. Old sinner that I am, I couldn't keep from crying where I was sitting in the organ-loft. I don't understand how it can be possible for a heretic and an Antichrist to talk like that. That man Luther, I must say, I—(Cries are heard from the church.) There, there!

Now something dreadful is going to happen again! And to think that the King should be gone just now!

Mother. Let us get away from here. If the Lord is with him, they can do him no harm. If it be the Devil—then Thy will be done, O Lord—but forgive him!

(Cries are heard outside. Exeunt the Mother, Christine, and the Sexton. For a few moments the stage stands empty and Olof's voice is heard more clearly than before. It is interrupted by cries and the rattling of stones thrown at the pulpit. Christine returns alone, locks the door on the inside, and falls on her knees at a prie-dieu. A number of violent blows are directed against the door from without, while the tumult in the church continues to increase. Then silence is restored, as Olof descends from the pulpit. His forehead is bleeding and he wears a haggard look.)

Olof (dropping into a chair without perceiving Christine). In vain! They will not! I take the fetters from the prisoner, and he hits me. I tell him he is free, and he doesn't believe me. Is that word "free" so big, then, that it can't be contained in a human brain? Oh, that I had one at least who believed—but to be alone—a fool whom no one understands—

Christine (coming forward). I believe in you, Olof!

Olof. Christine!

Christine. You are right!

Olof. How do you know?

Christine. I can't tell, but I believe it. I have been listening to you.

Olof. And you do not curse me?

Christine. You are preaching the word of God, are you not?

Olof. I am!

Christine. Why have we not been told these things before? Or why have they been told us in a language that we do not understand?

Olof. Who has put those words into your mouth, girl?

Christine. Who? I haven't thought of asking.

Olof. Your father?

Christine. He wants me to enter a convent.

Olof. Has it come to that? And what is your own wish?

Christine (catching sight of Olof's bleeding forehead). They have hurt you, Olof! For heaven's sake, let me help you!

Olof (sitting down again). Have I unsettled your faith, Christine?

Christine (takes the handkerchief, tears it into strips, and begins to dress Olof's wounds while speaking). My faith? I don't understand you.—Tell me, who is Luther?

Olof. I mustn't tell you.

Christine. Always the same answer! From my father, from your mother, and from yourself. Are you timid about telling me the truth, or is the truth really dangerous?

Olof. Truth is dangerous. Can't you see? (He points to his forehead.)

Christine. So you want me to be shut up in a convent cell to live a lifeless life in ignorance? (Olof does not reply.) You want me to weep away my life and my youth, and to keep on saying those endlessly long prayers until my soul is put to sleep? No—I won't do it, for now I am awake. All around me they are fighting, and suffering, and despairing. I have seen it, but I was to have no share in it. I was not even to look on, or to know the purpose of the fighting. You wanted me to be sunk in bestial slumber. But don't you believe me possessed of a soul, then—a soul that cannot be satisfied by bread or by dry prayers put into my mouth by others? "Bind not the spirits," you said. Oh, if you could only know how that word pierced me! Daylight came, and those wild cries out there sounded like the singing of birds in the morning—

Olof. You are a woman, Christine, and not born to fight!

Christine. But in the name of God, let me suffer, then! Only not be asleep! Don't you see that the Lord has awakened me in spite of all? You have never dared to tell me who Antichrist was. You have never dared to tell me who Luther was, and when your mother called you a Luther, I blessed Luther. If he be a heretic or a believer, I don't know, and I don't care; for no one—whether it be Luther, or the Pope, or Antichrist-can satisfy my immortal soul when I have no faith in the eternal God.

Olof. Will you follow me into the battle, Christine? For you can sustain me, and you only!

Christine. Now I am able to answer you with a frank "yes," for I know my own will—and I can do so without asking father first, for I am free. Oh, I am free!

Olof. And do you know what is in store for you?

Christine. I know! You will not have to shatter my mocking dreams—they are already gone. But you may be sure that I, too, have been dreaming of a knight who was to lay a kingdom at my feet and talk to me of flowers and love—Olof, I want to be your wife! Here is my hand! But this much I must tell you: that you never have been the knight of my dreams, and that I thank God he never came. For then he had also gone—as a dream.

Olof. Christine, you want to be mine—and I will make you happy. For when I suffered sorrow and temptation, you were always in my mind—and now you shall be at my side! You were the maiden of my dreams, kept captive in a tower by the stern castellan—and now you are mine!

Christine. Beware of dreams, Olof!

(Blows are heard on the door from outside.)

Olof. Who is that?

Voice (outside). Gert.

Olof. What will he say? My promise—

Christine. Are you afraid? Shall I open?

(Olof opens the door.)

[Enter Gert.]

Gert (starting at the sight of his daughter and Olof). Christine?—You have broken your promise, Olof!

Olof. I have not.

Gert. You lie! You have stolen my child, my one solace.

Christine. Olof is not lying.

Gert. You have been to church, Christine?

Christine. I have heard what you didn't want me to hear.

Gert. O Lord, this only joy Thou hast begrudged me!

Olof. The stream that you wanted to set free takes its victims where it can.

Gert. You have robbed me of her, of my child!

Olof. Give her to me, Father Gert!

Gert. Never!

Olof. Is she not free?

Gert. She is my child.

Olof. Are you not preaching freedom? She is mine! The Lord has given her to me, and you cannot take her away.

Gert. You are—thank God—a priest.

Olof and Christine. A priest!

Gert. And as such you cannot marry.

Olof. And if I do?

Gert. You would dare?

Olof. I would.

Gert. Do you want a man who is under the ban, Christine?

Christine. I don't know what that means.

Olof. There you see, Gert, there you see!

Gert. Thy punishment is harsh, O Lord!

Olof. The truth is for all.

Gert. Your love is greater than mine, which was nothing but selfishness. God bless you! Now I stand alone! (He embraces them.) There, now! Go home, Christine, and set their minds at rest. I want to speak to Olof. (Exit Christine.) Now you belong to me.

Olof. What do you mean?

Gert. Kinsman!—You got my letter?

Olof. It was you who advised me not to preach?

Gert. Quite the contrary, although I expressed myself somewhat strangely.

Olof. I don't understand.

Gert. No—no! You are still too young, and so you need a providence. To a man like you one says "Let be" when one wants him to do something.

Olof. Why were you and your followers not in church?

Gert. None but the sick need doctors. We were busy elsewhere. You have done a good piece of work to-day, and I see that you have got your reward for it. I have set you free to-day, Olof.

Olof. You have?

Gert. The King commanded you to quiet the rebellious, and what have you been doing?

Olof. Now I begin to understand you, Father Gert.

Gert. I am delighted! Yes, you have aroused even the calmest.

Olof. So I have.

Gert. What do you think the King will say to that?

Olof. I shall have to face it.

Gert. Good!

Olof. The King will approve my actions, for he wants a reformation, although he does not yet dare to start one himself.

Gert. You idiot!

Olof. I see that you want to set me against my lawful sovereign.

Gert. Tell me, how many masters do you think you can serve? (Olof makes no reply.) The King is here.

Olof. What do you say?

Gert. The King has just returned.

Olof. And the Anabaptists?

Gert. Locked up, of course.

Olof. And you stand here so calmly?

Gert. I am old now. Once I used to rage like you, but it only tired me out. Rink and Knipperdollink have served as my outposts. They had to fall, that's plain; now my work begins.

(Drum-beats are heard from the street.)

Olof. What is that?

Gert. The royal drums that keep the captives company to prison. Come here and see!

Olof (mounting one of the benches and looking out of the window). What do I see? Women and children are dragged along by the soldiers!

Gert. Well, they have been throwing stones at the King's guard. Do you think such things can be allowed?

Olof. But are madmen and sick people to be put into prison?

Gert. There are two kinds of madmen. One kind is sent to the hospital and treated with pills and cold baths. Those of the other kind have their heads cut off. It is a radical treatment, but then, for a fact, they are rather dangerous.

Olof. I'll go to the King. He cannot wish such dreadful things to happen.

Gert. Take care of your head, Olof!

Olof. Take care of your own, Father Gert!

Gert. No danger in my case, for I have a warrant for the asylum.

Olof. I cannot bear to see these things. I am going to the King, even if it cost my life. (He goes toward the door.)

Gert. This is a matter not to be settled by the King. You should appeal to the law.

Olof. The King is the law!

Gert. Unfortunately!—If the horse knew his own strength, he would never be mad enough, as he is now, to bear the yoke. But when once in a while he gets his reason back and runs away from his oppressors, then they call him mad—Let us pray the Lord to give these poor creatures their reason back!

ACT III

SCENE 1

(A Hall in the Royal Palace at Stockholm. In the background is a gallery which can be partitioned off by curtains. In elderly servant of the palace is pacing back and forth in the gallery.)

Enter Olof.

Olof. Is the King receiving to-day?

Servant. Yes.

Olof. Can you tell me why I have been kept waiting here in vain four days at a stretch?

Servant. No, heavens, I know nothing at all.

Olof. It seems strange that I have not been admitted.

Servant. What is it about?

Olof. That's none of your concern!

Servant. Of course not! I understand that, but I thought I might be able to give some information, perhaps.

Olof. Have you charge of the King's audiences?

Servant. Oh, heavens, no! But you see, when a man hears as much as I do, he knows a little of everything. (Pause.)

Olof. Do you think I shall have to wait long? (The servant pretends not to hear.) Do you know if the King is coming soon?

Servant (with his back turned to Olof). What?

Olof. Do you know to whom you are talking?

Servant. No, I don't.

Olof. I am the King's Secretary.

Servant. Oh, mercy, are you Master Olof? I knew your father, Peter the Smith, for I am also from Örebro.

Olof. Well, can't you be civil in spite of that?

Servant. Well, well! That's what happens when one gets on a little in this world—then one's humble parents are forgotten.

Olof. It is possible that my father actually honored you with his acquaintance, but I

doubt that he put you in a parent's place to me when he died.

Servant. Well, well! I declare! It must be hard on Dame Christine! [Exit to the left.]

[Olof is left alone for a while. Then Lars Siggesson, the Lord High Constable, enters from the right.]

Constable (throwing his cloak to Olof without looking at him). Will the King be here soon?

Olof (catching the cloak and throwing it on the floor). I do not know!

Constable. Bring me a chair.

Olof. That's not my office.

Constable. I am not familiar with the instructions of the doorkeeper.

Olof. I am no doorkeeper!

Constable. I don't care what you are, and I don't carry with me a list of the menials, but you will have to be civil! (Olof remains silent.) Well, what about it? I think the Devil has got into you!

Olof. Pardon me, but it is no part of my duty as secretary to wait on anybody.

Constable. What? Oh, Master Olof! Why, first you sit at the door playing lackey, and then you drop the mask and step forth as the Lord Himself! And I took you to be a proud man. (He picks up his cloak and places it on a bench.)

Olof. My Lord Constable!

Constable. But, no, you are only a vain upstart! Please step forward and be seated, Mr. Secretary.

[He points Olof to a seat and goes out into one of the side-rooms.]

[Olof sits down. A young Courtier enters through the gallery and salutes Olof.]

Courtier. Good morning, Secretary! Is nobody here yet? Well, how is everything in Stockholm? I have just arrived from Malmö.

Olof. Oh, everything is going wrong here.

Courtier. So I have heard. The mob has been muttering as usual whenever the King's back is turned. And then there are those fool priests!—I beg your pardon, Secretary, but, of course, you are a freethinker?

Olof. I don't quite understand.

Courtier. Don't mind me, please. You see, I have been educated in Paris. Francis the First—O Saint-Sauveur!—that's a man who has extreme views. Do you know what he told me at a bal masqué during the last carnival? (Olof remains silent.) "Monsieur," he said, "la religion est morte, est morte," he said. Which didn't keep him from attending mass.

Olof. Is that so?

Courtier. Do you know what he replied when I asked him why he did so?—"Poetry! Poetry!" he said. Oh, he is divine!

Olof. What did you answer?

Courtier. "Your Majesty," I said—in French, of course—"fortunate the land that has a king who can look so far beyond the narrow horizon of his own time that he perceives what the spirit of the age demands, without trying to urge the masses to embrace that higher view of life for which they will not be ready for many centuries to come!" Wasn't that pretty clever?

Olof. Oh, yes, but I think it must have lost a great deal in being translated. Things of that kind should be spoken in French.

Courtier (preoccupied). You are quite right.—Tell me—your fortune ought to be assured—you are so far in advance of your time?

Olof. I fear I shall not get very far. My education was neglected, unfortunately—I studied in Germany, as you may know—and the Germans are not beyond religion yet.

Courtier. Indeed, indeed! Can you tell me why they are making such a hubbub about that Reformation down there in Germany? Luther is a man of enlightenment—I know it—I believe it—but why shouldn't he keep it to himself, or at least not waste any sparks of light on the brutish herd to which they can be nothing but so many pearls thrown to the swine. If you let your eye survey the time we are living in—if you make some effort to follow the great currents of thought—then you will easily perceive the cause of that disturbed equilibrium which is now making itself felt in all the great civilized countries; I am not talking of Sweden, of course, which is not a civilized country. Can you name the centre of gravity—that centre which cannot be disturbed without everything going to pieces—the instability of which tends to upset everything? The name of it is—the nobility. The nobility is the thinking principle. The feudal system is falling—and that means the world. Erudition is in decay. Civilization is dying. Yes, indeed—You don't believe that? But if you have any historical outlook at all, you can see that it is so. The nobility started the Crusades. The nobility has done this and that and everything. Why is Germany being torn to pieces? Because the peasantry has risen against the nobility, thus cutting off its own head. Why is France safe—la France? Because France is one with the nobility, and the nobility is one with France—because those two ideas are identical, inseparable. And why, I ask again, is Sweden at present shaken to its nethermost foundations? Because the nobility has been crushed. Christian the Second was a man of genius. He knew how to conquer a country. He didn't cut off a leg or an arm—nay, he cut off the head. Well, then! Sweden must be saved, and the King knows how. The nobility is to be restored, and the Church is to be crushed. What do you say to that?

Olof (rising). Nothing! (Pause.) You are a freethinker?

Courtier. Of course!

Olof. You don't believe, then, that Balaam's ass could talk?

Courtier. Gracious, no!

Olof. But I do.

Courtier. Really?

[Enter Lars Andersson.]

Lars Andersson. The peace of the Lord be with you, Olof.

Olof (embracing him). Well met, Lars!

Courtier. Populace! [Exit.]

Lars. Well, how do you like living here?

Olof. It's so close!

Lars. Somewhat!

Olof. And no room overhead.

Lars. That's why they find it so hard to keep their backs straight.

Olof. In ten minutes I have become so much of a courtier that I know how to be silent when an ass is talking.

Lars. There is no harm in that.

Olof. What does the King think?

Lars. He doesn't tell.

(A number of people have begun to gather in the hall.)

Olof. How does he look?

Lars. Like an interrogation point followed by several exclamation marks.

[Enter Bishop Brask. All give way before him. The Lord High Constable, who has returned in the meantime, goes to meet him and exchanges greetings with him. Olof salutes the Bishop, who looks surprised.]

Brask (to the Constable). Is this a place for the clerks?

Constable. It ought not to be, but our King is so very gracious.

Brask. Condescending, you mean?

Constable. Exactly.

Brask. The audience is well attended to-day.

Constable. Mostly formal calls occasioned by the happy return of His Highness.

Brask. It is a pleasure, my Lord Constable, to offer His Highness our sincere felicitations on the happy solution of this question.

Constable. It is indeed courteous in Your Grace to incur the trouble of such a long journey—especially at Your Grace's advanced age.

Brask. Unfortunately, my health is not always to be depended upon.

Constable. Is Your Grace not enjoying good health? It is hard to feel one's strength failing, particularly for one who occupies such an exalted and responsible position.

Brask. You look very well, my Lord Constable.

Constable. Yes, thank God! (Pause.)

Brask (seating himself). Don't you think there is a draught here, my Lord?

Constable. It seems so. Perhaps we might order the doors to be closed?

Brask. No, thank you, that will not be necessary. (Pause.)

Constable. The King is long in coming.

Brask. Yes.

Constable. Perhaps you won't find it worth your while to wait for him.

Brask. Perhaps not!

Constable. With your permission, I will send word to Your Grace's servants.

Brask. As I have waited so long, I think I shall wait a little longer. (Pause.)

Servant. His Highness!

[Enter Gustaf.]

Gustaf. I bid you welcome, gentlemen. (He takes a seat at a table.) If you will please step out into the antechamber, I will receive you one at a time. (All retire except Bishop Brask.) Our Lord Constable will stay.

Brask. Your Highness!

Gustaf (raising his voice). Sir Lars! (Brask goes out, the Constable remaining; pause.) Speak! What am I to do?

Constable. Your Highness, the State has lost its prop, and therefore it is toppling over; the State has an enemy that has grown too strong for it. Restore the prop, which is the nobility, and crush the enemy, which is the Church!

Gustaf. I dare not!

Constable. You must, Your Highness!

Gustaf. What's that?

Constable. First of all: Brask is in correspondence with the Pope to have the inquisition established here. Lübeck is insisting on her shameless demands and threatens war. The treasury is empty. There is rebellion in every nook and corner of the country—

Gustaf. That's enough! But I have the people with me.

Constable. I beg your pardon—you have not. There are the Dalecarlians, for instance—a spoiled lot, always disputing with those of Lübeck about the honor of having bestowed a king on Sweden. They are ready to rebel on the slightest occasion, and they are coming forward with demands like these: "There shall be no outlandish customs used, with slittered and motley colored clothes, such as have of late been brought into the King's court."

Gustaf. 'Sdeath!

Constable. "Whosoever eats meat on Fridays or Saturdays shall be burned at the stake or otherwise made away with." And furthermore, "There shall be no new faith

or Lutheran teachings foisted upon us." What a treacherous, impudent people!

Gustaf. And yet there was a time when they showed themselves to be men.

Constable. Well, what wonder if they carried water when their house was afire? How many times have they broken troth and faith? But they have so often heard themselves lauded that they have come to give the name of "old Swedish honesty" to their own brute arrogance.

Gustaf. You belong to the nobility!

Constable. Yes, and it is my conviction that the peasant has played out his part—the part of a crude force needed to drive away the enemy by sheer strength of arm. Crush the Church, Your Highness, for it is keeping the people in fetters. Seize the gold of the Church and pay the country's debt—and give back to the reduced nobility what the Church has obtained from it by dupery.

Gustaf. Call in Brask.

Constable. Your Highness!

Gustaf. Call Bishop Brask! [Exit the Constable.]

[Enter Bishop Brask.]

Gustaf. Speak, Your Grace!

Brask. I wish to offer our congratulations on—

Gustaf. I thank Your Grace! And what more?

Brask. There have been complaints from several districts, I am sorry to say, about unpaid loans of silver exacted from the churches by Your Highness.

Gustaf. Which you now are trying to recover. Are all the chalices actually needed for communion?

Brask. They are.

Gustaf Let them use pewter mugs, then.

Brask. Your Highness!

Gustaf. Anything more?

Brask. What is worse than anything else—all this heresy!

Gustaf. No concern of mine! I am not the Pope.

Brask. I have to warn Your Highness that the Church must look out for her own rights, even if doing so should bring her into conflict—

Gustaf. With whom?

Brask. With the State.

Gustaf. Your Church can go to the devil! There, I have said it!

Brask. I knew it.

Gustaf. And you were only waiting for me to say so?

Brask. Exactly.

Gustaf. Take care! You travel with a following of two hundred men, and you eat from silver, when the people are living on bark.

Brask. Your Highness takes too narrow a view of the matter.

Gustaf. Have you heard of Luther? You are a well-informed man. What kind of a phenomenon is he? What have you to say of the movements that are now spreading throughout Europe?

Brask. Progress backward! Luther is merely destined to serve as a purging fire for what is ancient, descended from untold ages and well tried, so that it may be cleansed and by the struggle urged on to greater victories.

Gustaf. I care nothing for your learned arguments.

Brask. But Your Highness is extending protection to criminals and interfering with the privileges of the Church; for the Church has been grievously wronged by Master Olof.

Gustaf. Well, put him under the ban.

Brask. It has been done, and yet he remains in the service of Your Highness.

Gustaf. What more do you want done to him? Tell me? (Pause.)

Brask. Furthermore, he has gone so far as to marry secretly in violation of the Canon Law.

Gustaf. Is that so? That's quick action.

Brask. It doesn't concern Your Highness? Good and well! But if he stirs up the people?

Gustaf. Then I'll step in. Anything more?

Brask (after a pause). I ask you for heaven's sake not to plunge the country into disaster again. It is not yet ripe for a new faith. We are but reeds in the wind and can be bent—but when it comes to the faith, or the Church—never!

Gustaf (holding out his hand to the Bishop). Maybe you are right! But let us be enemies rather than false friends, Bishop Hans!

Brask. Be it so! But do not do what you will regret. Every stone you tear out of the Church will be thrown at you by the people.

Gustaf. Don't force me to extremes, Your Grace, for then we shall have the same horrible spectacle here as in Germany. For the last time: are you willing to make concessions if the welfare of the country is at stake?

Brask. The Church—

Gustaf. The Church comes first—very well! Good-bye!

[Exit Brask. Reënter the Constable.]

Gustaf. The Bishop has confirmed your statement, and that was what I wanted him to do. Now we shall need stone-masons who know how to tear down. The walls will be left, the cross may stay on the roof and the bell in the tower, but I will clear out the vaults. One must begin at the bottom!

Constable. The people will think you are taking away their faith. They will have to be educated.

Gustaf. We'll send Master Olof to preach to them.

Constable. Master Olof is a dangerous man.

Gustaf. But needed just now.

Constable. He has carried on like the Anabaptists instead of opposing them.

Gustaf. I know. We'll get to that later on. Send him in.

Constable. Lars the Chancellor would be a better man.

Gustaf. Bring them both in.

Constable. Or Olof's brother, Lars Pedersson.

Gustaf. No good yet. He is too soft for fighting, but his time will come, too. [Exit Constable.]

The Constable returns with Master Olof and Lars Andersson.

Gustaf (to the Chancellor). Do you want to help me, Lars?

Lars. You are thinking of the Church?

Gustaf. Yes, it will have to be torn down.

Lars. I am not the man for that. Your Majesty had better ask Master Olof.

Gustaf. You won't, then?

Lars. I can't! But I have a weapon for you. (He hands the new translation of the Bible to the King.)

Gustaf. Holy Writ! A good weapon, indeed! Will you wield it, Olof?

Olof. With the help of God—yes!

Gustaf (to Olof, after having signalled to Lars to leave). Have you calmed down yet, Olof? (Olof does not answer). I gave you four days to think it over. How have you been carrying out your task?

Olof (impetuously). I have spoken to the people—

Gustaf. Still in a fever! And you mean to defend those madmen named Anabaptists?

Olof (bravely). I do!

Gustaf. Steady!—You have married in a hurry?

Olof. I have.

Gustaf. You are under the ban?

Olof. I am.

Gustaf. And still as brave as ever! If you were sent to the gallows as a rebel with the rest, what would you say then?

Olof. I should regret not being permitted to finish my task, but I should thank the Lord for having been allowed to do what I have done.

Gustaf. That's good! Would you dare to go up to that old owl's-nest Upsala and tell its learned men that the Pope is not God and that he has nothing to do with Sweden?

Olof. Only that?

Gustaf. Will you tell them that the only word of God is the Bible?

Olof. Must that be all?

Gustaf. You are not to mention the name of Luther!

Olof (after some hesitation). Then I will not go.

Gustaf. Would you rather go to your death?

Olof. No, but I know that my sovereign needs me.

Gustaf. It isn't noble to take advantage of my misfortune, Olof. Well, say anything; you please, but you will have to pardon me if I take back a part of it afterwards.

Olof. Truth isn't sold by the yard.

Gustaf. 'Sdeath! (Changing tone.) Well, suit yourself!

Olof (kneeling). Then I may say all that is in my mind?

Gustaf. You may.

Olof. Then, if I can only throw a single spark of doubt into the soul of this sleeping people, my life will not have been wasted.—It is to be a reformation, then?

Gustaf (after a pause). Yes. (Pause.)

Olof (timidly). And what is to become of the Anabaptists?

Gustaf. Need you ask? They must die.

Olof. Will Your Highness permit me one more question?

Gustaf. Tell me: what do those madmen want?

Olof. The sad thing is that they do not know it themselves, and if I were to tell you—

Gustaf. Speak out!

[Gert enters quickly, pretending to be insane.]

Gustaf. Who are you to dare intrude here?

Gert. I want most humbly to beseech Your Highness to attest the correctness of this document.

Gustaf. Wait till you are called.

Gert. Of course, I should like to, but the guards won't wait for me. I escaped from prison, you see, because my place wasn't there.

Gustaf. Are you one of those Anabaptists?

Gert. Yes, I happened to get mixed up with them, but here I have a certificate proving that I belong to the asylum, the third department for incurables, cell number seven.

Gustaf (to Olof). Send word to the guard.

Gert. That isn't necessary, for I want nothing but justice, and it's something the guard doesn't handle.

Gustaf (looking hard at Gert). I suppose you have had a share in those outrages in the city churches?

Gert. Of course, I have! No sane person could behave so madly. We wanted only to make a few minor alterations in the style. They seemed too low in the ceiling.

Gustaf. What do you really want?

Gert. Oh, we want a great deal, although we haven't got through with one-half of it yet. Yes, we want so many things and we want them so quickly, that our reason cannot keep pace with them, and that's why it has been lagging behind a little. Yes, we wish among other things to change the furnishings a little in the churches, and to remove the windows because the air seems so musty. Yes, and there is a lot more we want, but that will have to wait for a while.

Gustaf (to Olof). That's a perilous disease—for anything else it cannot be.

Olof. Who knows?

Gustaf. Now I am tired. You'll have a fortnight in which to get ready. Your hand that you will help me!

Olof. I will do my part.

Gustaf. Give orders to have Rink and Knipperdollink sent to Malmö.

Olof. And then?

Gustaf. They'll have a chance to escape. That fool over there you can send back to the asylum. Farewell! [Exit.]

Gert (shaking his clenched fist after Gustaf). Well, are we going?

Olof. Where?

Gert. Home. (Olof remains silent.) You don't wish to send your father-in-law to the madhouse, do you, Olof?

Olof. You ask me what I wish—How about my duty?

Gert. Is there no duty above the royal command?

Olof. Are you beginning again?

Gert. What will Christine say if you put her father among madmen?

Olof. Tempt me not!

Gert. Do you see how difficult it is to serve the King? (Olof does not answer.) I won't make you unhappy, my poor boy. Here's balm for your conscience. (He takes out a document.)

Olof. What is it?

Gert. A certificate of health. You see, it is necessary to be a madman among sane people, and sane among mad men.

Olof. How did you get it?

Gert. Don't you think I deserve it?

Olof. I can't tell.

Gert. True enough: you don't yet dare.

[Enter Servant.]

Servant. Will you please go your way. They 're about to sweep.

Gert. Perhaps the place has to be aired, too?

Servant. Yes, indeed!

Gert. Don't forget to open the windows.

Servant. No, you may be sure, and it's needed, too, for we are not accustomed to this kind of company.

Gert. Look here, old man—I carry a greeting from your father.

Servant. Oh, you do?

Gert. Perhaps you never knew him?

Servant. Why, certainly!

Gert. Do you know what he said?

Servant. No.

Gert. Wet the broom, he said, or you'll get the dust all over yourself.

Servant. I don't understand.

Gert. Well, that's your only excuse.

[Exeunt Gert and Olof.]

Servant. Rabble!

SCENE 2

(Olof's Study. There are windows in the background, through which the sun is shining into the room. Trees are visible outside. Christine is standing at one of the windows, watering her flowers. While doing so she is prattling to some birds in a cage. Olof is seated at a table, writing. With an impatient mien he looks up and across the room to Christine as if he wished her to keep quiet. This happens several times, until at last Christine knocks down one of the flower pots, when Olof taps the floor lightly with his foot.)

Christine. Oh, my poor little flower! Look, Olof, four buds were broken off.

Olof. Yes, I see.

Christine. No, you don't. You must come over here.

Olof. My dear, I haven't time.

Christine. You haven't looked at the starlings which I bought for you this morning. Don't you think they sing sweetly?

Olof. Rather.

Christine. Rather?

Olof. It's hard for me to work when they are screaming like that.

Christine. They are not screaming, Olof, but you seem to be more fond of a night

bird that does scream. Tell me, what is the meaning of the owl that appears on your signet ring?

Olof. The owl is an ancient symbol of wisdom.

Christine. I think that's stupid! Wise people don't love the darkness.

Olof. The wise man hates the darkness and the night, but his keen eye turns night into day.

Christine. Why are you always right, Olof? Can you tell me?

Olof. Because I know it pleases you, my dear, to let me be in the right.

Christine. Now, you are right again.—What is that you are writing?

Olof. I am translating.

Christine. Read a little of it to me.

Olof. I don't think you could understand it.

Christine. Why shouldn't I? Is it not in Swedish?

Olof. Yes, but it is too abstract for you.

Christine. Abstract? What does that mean?

Olof. You wouldn't understand if I told you, but if you don't understand what I read to you, then you understand what is meant by "abstract."

Christine (picking up a piece of half-finished embroidery). Go on and read while I work at this.

Olof. Listen carefully, then, and forgive me if you find it tedious.

Christine. I shall understand because I want to.

Olof (reading). "Matter when considered separate from form is something wholly without predictability, indeterminable and indistinguishable. For nothing can originate out of pure non-being, but only out of the non-being of reality, which is synonymous with being as a possibility. Being in its possibility is no more

non-being than is reality. For that reason every existence is a realized possibility. Thus matter is to Aristotle a much more positive substratum than to Plato, who declares it to be pure non-being. And thereby it becomes plain how Aristotle could conceive of matter in its opposition to form as a positive negativity."

Christine (throwing aside her work). Stop! Why is it that I cannot understand that? Have I not the same mental faculties as you? I am ashamed, Olof, because you have such a poor creature of a wife that she cannot understand what you say. No, I will stick to my embroidery, I will clean and dust your study, I will at least learn to read your wishes in your eyes. I may become your slave, but never, never shall I be able to understand you. Oh, Olof, I am not worthy of you! Why did you make me your wife? You must have over-valued me in a moment of intoxication. Now you will regret it, and we shall both be unhappy.

Olof. Christine! Don't take it like that, dear! Come and sit here by me. (He picks up the embroidery.) Will you believe me if I tell you that I couldn't possibly do a thing like this? Never in my life could I do it. Are you not then cleverer than I, and am I not the lesser of us two?

Christine. But why can't you do it?

Olof. For the same reason that you couldn't understand me a moment ago: I haven't learned how. And perhaps you will feel happy once more if I tell you that you can learn to understand this book—which, by the by, is not identical with me—while on the other hand, I could never learn to do your work.

Christine. Why couldn't you?

Olof. Because I am not built that way and don't want to do it.

Christine. But if you wanted to?

Olof. Well, there, my dear, you have my weak point. I could never want to do it. Believe me, you are stronger than I, for you have power over your own will, but I have not.

Christine. Do you think I could learn to understand that book of yours?

Olof. I am convinced of it. But you must not.

Christine. Am I still to be kept in ignorance?

Olof. No, no—understand me right! The moment you understood what I understand, you would cease to think of me as—

Christine. A god—

Olof. Let it go at that! But believe me, you would lose what now puts you above me—the power to control your own will—and then you would be less than I, and I could not respect you. Do you see? It stakes us happy to overvalue each other; let us keep that illusion.

Christine. Now I don't understand you at all, but I must trust you, Olof. You are right!

Olof. Please leave me alone, Christine—I beg you!

Christine. Do I disturb you?

Olof. There are some very serious thoughts that occupy me. You know, I expect something decisive to happen today. The King has abdicated because the people would not do what he desired. To-day I shall either reach my goal or have to start the fight all over again.

Christine. May I not be happy to-day, Olof—on Midsummer Eve?

Olof. Why should you be so very happy to-day?

Christine. Why should I not—since I have been set free from slavery and have become your wife?

Olof. Can you forgive me that my happiness is a little more sober because it has cost me—a mother?

Christine. I know, and I feel it very deeply. But when your mother learns of our marriage, she will forgive you and put her curse on me. Whose burden will then be

the heavier? However, it doesn't matter, because it's borne for your sake. And this much I know: that terrible struggles are awaiting you; that daring thoughts are growing in your mind; and that I can never share your struggle, never help you with advice, never defend you against those that vilify you—but still I must look on, and through it all I must go on living in my own little world, employing myself with petty things which you do not appreciate, but would miss if they were not attended to. Olof, I cannot weep with you, so you must help me to make you smile with me. Come down from those heights which I cannot attain. Leave your battles on the hilltops and return some time to our home. As I cannot ascend to you, you must descend to me for a moment. Forgive me, Olof, if I talk childishly! I know that you are a man sent by the Lord, and I have felt the blessing with which your words are fraught. But you are more than that—you are a man, and you are my husband—or at least ought to be. You won't fall from your exalted place if you put aside your solemn speech now and then and let the clouds pass from your forehead. You are not too great, are you, to look at a flower or listen to a bird? I put the flowers on your table, Olof, in order that they might rest your eyes—and you ordered the maid to take them out because they gave you a headache. I tried to cheer the lonely silence of your work by bringing the birds—whose song you call screaming. I asked you to come to dinner a while ago—you hadn't time. I wanted to talk to you—you hadn't time. You despise this little corner of reality—and yet that is what you have set aside for me. You don't want to lift me up to you—but try at least not to push me further down. I will take away everything that might disturb your thoughts. You shall have peace from me—and from my rubbish! (She throws the flowers out of the window, picks up the birdcage, and starts to leave.)

Olof. Christine, dear child, forgive me! You don't understand me!

Christine. Always the same: "You don't understand me!" Oh, I know now what it means. In that moment in the sacristy I matured so completely that I reached my second childhood at once!

Olof. I'll look at your birds and prattle with your flowers, dear heart.

Christine (putting aside the bird-cage). No, the time for prattle is gone by—from now on we shall be serious. You need not fear my boisterous happiness. It was only put on for your sake, and as it doesn't suit your sombre calling, I'll—(She bursts into tears.)

Olof (putting his arms around her and kissing her.) Christine! Christine! You are right! Please pardon me!

Christine. You gave me an unlucky gift, Olof, when you gave me freedom, for I don't know what to do with it. I must have some one to obey!

Olof. And so you shall, but don't let us talk of it any more. Let us eat now—in fact, I feel quite hungry.

Christine (pleased). Do you really know how to be hungry? (At that moment she looks out of the window and makes a gesture of dismay.) Go on, Olof, and I'll be with you in a moment. I only want to get things in a little better order in here.

Olof (as he goes out). Don't let me wait so long for you as you have had to wait for me.

(Christine folds her hands as if praying and takes up a position indicating that she is waiting far somebody about to enter from the street. Pause.)

[Enter Olof's Mother. She passes Christine without looking at her.]

Mother. Is Master Olof at home?

Christine (who has started to meet her in a friendly way, is taken aback for a moment; then she answers in the same tone). No, but if you care to be seated, he will be here soon.

Mother. Thank you! (She seats herself. Pause.) Bring me a glass of water. (Christine waits on her.) Now you can leave me.

Christine. It is my housewifely duty to bear you company.

Mother. I didn't know that the housekeeper of a priest could call herself a housewife.

Christine. I am the wife of Olof with the sanction of the Lord. Don't you know that we are married?

Mother. You are a harlot—that's what I know!

Christine. That word I do not understand.

Mother. You are the same kind of woman as she with whom Master Olof was talking that evening in the beer-shop.

Christine. The one that looked so unhappy? Yes, I don't feel very happy.

Mother. Of course not! Take yourself out of my sight! Your presence shames me!

Christine (on her knees). For the sake of your son, don't heap abuse on me!

Mother. With a mother's authority I command you to leave my son's house, the threshold of which you have defiled.

Christine. As a housewife I open my door to whom I may choose to receive. I should have closed it to you, had I been able to guess what language you would use.

Mother. Big words, indeed! I command you to leave!

Christine. With what right do you force yourself into this house in order to drive me out of my own home? You have borne a son, and raised him—that was your duty, your mission, and you may thank your God for being permitted to fill that mission so well, which is a good fortune not granted to everybody. Now you have reached the edge of the grave. Why not resign yourself before the end comes? Or have you raised your son so poorly that he is still a child and needs your guidance? If you want gratitude, come and look for it, but not in this way. Or do you think it is the destiny of a child to sacrifice its own life merely to show you gratitude? His mission is calling: "Go!" And you cry to him: "Come to me, you ingrate!" Is he to go astray—is he to waste his powers, that belong to his country, to mankind—merely for the satisfaction of your private little selfishness? Or do you imagine that the fact

of having borne and raised him does even entitle you to gratitude? Did not your life's mission and destiny lie in that? Should you not thank the Lord for being given such a high mission? Or did you do it only that you might spend the rest of your life clamoring for gratitude? Don't you see that by using that word "gratitude" you tear down all that you have built up before? And what makes you presume that you have rights over me? Is marriage to mean a mortgaging of my free will to anybody whom nature has made the mother or father of my husband—who unfortunately could not exist without either? You are not my mother. My troth was not pledged to you when I took Olof as my husband. And I have sufficient respect for my husband not to permit anybody to insult him, even if it be his own mother. That's why I have spoken as I have!

Mother. Alas, such are the fruits borne by the teachings of my son!

Christine. If you choose to revile your son, it had better be in his presence. (She goes to the door and calls.) Olof!

Mother. Such guile already!

Christine. Already? It's nothing new, I think, although I didn't know I had it until it was needed.

[Enter Olof.]

Olof. Mother! I am right glad to see you!

Mother. Thanks, my son—and good-bye!

Olof. Are you going? What does that mean? I wish to talk to you.

Mother. No need! She has said all there is to say. You will not have to show me the door.

Olof. In God's name, mother, what are you saying? Christine, what does this mean?

Mother (about to leave). Good-bye, Olof! This is more than I can ever forgive you!

Olof (trying to hold her back). Stay and explain, at least!

Mother. It was not worthy of you! To send her to tell me that you owe me nothing and need me no more! Oh, that was cruel! [Exit.]

Olof. What did you say, Christine?

Christine. I don't remember, because there were so many things which I had never dared to think, but which I must have dreamt while father kept me still enslaved.

Olof. I don't know you any more, Christine.

Christine. No, I begin to feel a little lost myself.

Olof. Were you unkind to mother?

Christine. I suppose I was. Does it seem to you that I have grown hard, Olof?

Olof. Did you show her the door?

Christine. Forgive me, Olof! I was not kind to her.

Olof. For my sake you might have made your words a little milder. Why didn't you call me at once?

Christine. I wished to see if I had the strength to take care of myself. Olof, would you sacrifice me to your mother, if she demanded it?

Olof. I cannot answer such a question offhand.

Christine. I'll do it in your place. It pleases you to submit willingly to your mother's will and wish because you are strong—and I, on the other hand, feel hurt by doing so, for I am weak. I will never do it!

Olof. Not if I ask you?

Christine. That's more than you can ask. Or would you have me hate her?—Tell me, Olof, what is meant by a "harlot"?

Olof. You ask such strange questions.

Christine. Will you please answer me?

Olof. Will you forgive me if I don't?

Christine. Always this unending silence! Do you not yet dare to tell me all? Am I to be a child forever? Then you had better put me in a nursery and talk baby-talk to me.

Olof. It means an unfortunate woman.

Christine. No, it means something more than that.

Olof. Has anybody dared to use that word to you?

Christine (after a pause). No.

Olof. Now you are not telling the truth, Christine.

Christine. I know I lie! Oh, since yesterday I have grown very wicked!

Olof. You are hiding something that happened yesterday!

Christine. I am—I thought that I could keep it to myself, but it has grown too much for me.

Olof. Speak—I beg you!

Christine. But you mustn't call me silly! A crowd of people pursued me all the way to our door and called after me that horrible word which I don't understand. People do not laugh at an unfortunate woman—

Olof. Yes, dear, that's just what they do.

Christine. I didn't understand their words, but their actions were plain enough to make me wicked!

Olof. And yet you were so kind to me! Forgive me if I have been hard to you!—It is a name given by brute force to its own victims. Sooner or later, you'll learn more about it, but never dare to defend an "unfortunate woman"—for then they will throw mud at you! (A messenger enters and hands him a letter.) At last! (After a glance at the letter.) You read it to me, Christine! It is from your lips I want to hear the glad tidings.

Christine (reading). "Young man, you have conquered! I, your enemy, desire to be the first to tell you so, and I address myself to you without any sense of humiliation

because, in speaking for the new faith, you have wielded no weapons but those of the spirit. Whether you be right, I cannot tell, but I think you have deserved a piece of advice from an older man: stop here, for your enemies are gone! Do not wage war on creatures made of air, for that will lame your arm and you will die of dry rot. Do not put your trust in princes—is another piece of advice given you by a once powerful man who has now to step aside and leave to the Lord to settle what is to become of his prostrated Church. Johannes Brask." (Speaking.) You have conquered!

Olof (joyfully). I thank Thee, Lord, for this hour. (Pause.) No, it scares me, Christine! This fortune is too great. I am too young to have reached the goal already. To have no more to do—oh, what a frightful thought! No further fighting—that would be death!

Christine. Oh, rest a moment, and be happy that it is over.

Olof. Can there be an end to anything? An end to such a beginning? No, no!—Oh, that I could begin it all anew! It wasn't the victory I wanted, but the fight!

Christine. Olof, do not tempt the Lord! I have a feeling that much remains undone—very much, indeed!

[Enter Courtier.]

Courtier. Good-day to you, Secretary! And pleasant news! [Exit Christine.]

Olof. Be welcome! Some of it I have heard already.

Courtier. Thanks for your splendid answering of that stupid Galle. You went after him like a man. A little too fiercely, perhaps—not quite so much fire, you know! And a little venom doesn't hurt.

Olof. You have news from the King?

Courtier. Yes, and you shall have a brief summary of the conditions agreed on: First, mutual support for the resistance and punishment of all rebellions.

Olof. Go on, if you please.

Courtier. Second, the King shall have the right to take possession of the palaces and fortified places of the bishops, as well as to fix their incomes—

Olof. Third—

Courtier. Now comes the best of all—the principal point of the whole undertaking: Third, the nobility shall have the right to claim whatever of its properties and inheritances have fallen to churches and cloisters since the revision by King Carl Knutsson in 1454—

Olof. And fourth?

Courtier. Provided the heir can get twelve men under oath to attest his right of inheritance at the assizes. (He folds the document from which he has been reading.)

Olof. Have you finished?

Courtier. Yes. Isn't that pretty good?

Olof. Nothing more?

Courtier. Oh, there are a few minor points of no special importance.

Olof. Let me hear them.

Courtier (reading again). There is a fifth point about the right of preachers to preach the word of God, but, of course, they have had that all the time.

Olof. Nothing more?

Courtier. Yes, then comes the ordinance: a register is to be established showing the amount of tithes collected by all bishops, chapters, and canons, and the King shall have the right to prescribe—

Olof. Oh, that's neither here nor there!

Courtier.—how much of those may be retained, and how much shall be surrendered to him for the use of the Crown; furthermore, all Appointments to spiritual

offices—and this ought to interest you—to spiritual offices, minor as well as major, can hereafter be made only with the sanction of the King, so that—

Olof. Will you please read me the point dealing with the faith—

Courtier. The faith—there is nothing about it. Oh, yes, let me see—from this day the Gospel is to be read in all schoolhouses.

Olof. Is that all?

Courtier. All? Oh, no, I remember! I have a special order from the King to you—and a most sensible one—that, as the people are stirred up over all these innovations, you must by no means disturb the old forms; must not abolish masses, holy water, nor any other usage, nor furthermore indulge in any reckless acts, for hereafter the King will not close his eyes to your escapades as he has had to do in the past, when he lacked power to do otherwise.

Olof. I see! And the new faith which he has permitted me to preach so far?

Courtier. It is to ripen slowly.—It will come! It will come!

Olof. Is there anything more?

Courtier (rising). No. If you will only keep calm now, you may go very far. Oh, yes—I came near forgetting the best part of all. My dear Pastor, permit me to congratulate you! Here is your appointment. Pastor of the city church, with an income of three thousand, at your age—indeed, you could now settle down in peace and enjoy life, even if you were never to get any further. It is splendid to have reached one's goal while still so young. I congratulate you! [Exit.]

Olof (flinging the appointment on the floor). So this is all that I have fought and suffered for! An appointment! A royal appointment! I have been serving Belial instead of God! Woe be to you, false King, who have sold your Lord and God! Alas for me, who have sold my life and my labors to mammon! O God in Heaven, forgive me! (He throws himself, weeping, on a bench.)

[Enter Christine and Gert. Christine comes forward, while Gert remains in the background.]

Christine (picks up the appointment and reads it; then she runs to Olof, her face beaming). Now, Olof, I can wish you joy with a happy heart! (She starts to caress him, but he leaps to his feet and pushes her away.)

Olof. Leave me alone! You, too!

Gert (coming forward). Well, Olof, the faith—

Olof. The lack of faith, you mean!

Gert. The Pope is beaten, isn't he? Hadn't we better begin with the Emperor soon?

Olof. We began at the wrong end.

Gert. At last!

Olof. You were right, Gert! I am with you now! It's war, but it must be open and honest.

Gert. Until to-day you have been dreaming childish dreams.

Olof. I know it. Now the flood is coming! Let it come! Alas for them and for us!

Christine. Olof, for Heaven's sake, stop!

Olof. Leave me, child! Here you will be drowned, or you will drag me down.

Gert. What made you venture out in the storm, my child?

[Exit Christine.]

(The ringing of bells, the joyful shouting of crowds, and the sounding of drums and trumpets become audible.)

Olof (going to the window). What has set the people shouting?

Gert. The King is providing them with a maypole and music outside North Gate.

Olof. And are they not aware that he will chasten them with swords instead of rods?

Gert. Aware? If they were!

Olof. Poor children! They dance to his piping and follow his drums to their death! Must all die, then, in order that one may live?

Gert. No, one shall die that all may live!

(Olof makes a gesture dismay and repugnance.)

ACT IV

(A Room in the House of Olof's Mother. At the right stands a bedstead with four posts, in which the Mother is lying sick. Christine is asleep on a chair. Lars Pedersson is renewing the oil of the night-lamp and turning the hour glass.)

Lars (speaking to himself). Midnight—Now comes the critical time. (He goes to the bed and listens. At that moment Christine moans in her sleep. He crosses the room and wakens her.) Christine! (She wakes with a start.) Go to bed, child; I will watch.

Christine. No, I will wait. I must speak to her before she dies—I think Olof should be here soon.

Lars. It is for his sake you are watching!

Christine. Yes, and you mustn't say that I have slept. Do you hear?

Lars. Poor girl!—You're not happy!

Christine. Who says one should be happy?

Lars. Does Olof know that you are here?

Christine. No, he would never permit it. He wants to keep me like the carved image of some saint standing on a shelf. The smaller and weaker he can make me, the greater is his pleasure in placing his strength at my feet—

Mother (waking). Lars! (Christine holds back Lars and steps forward.) Who is that?

Christine. The nurse.

Mother. Christine!

Christine. Do you want anything?

Mother. Nothing from you.

Christine. Dame Christine!

Mother. Don't make my last moments more bitter. Go away from here!

Lars (coming forward). What do you want, mother?

Mother. Take away that woman! And bring the father confessor—I shall soon die.

Lars. Is not your own son worthy of receiving your last confidences?

Mother. No, he has done nothing to deserve them. Has Mårten come yet?

Lars. Mårten is a bad man.

Mother. O Lord, how terrible Thy punishment! My children standing between myself and Thee! Am I then to be denied the consolations of religion in my last moments? You have taken my life—do you want to destroy my soul, too—the soul of your mother? (She falls into a faint.)

Lars. Do you hear that, Christine! What are we to do? Shall we let her die in the deception practised on her by a miserable wretch like Mårten—and perhaps get her thanks for it—or shall we turn her final prayer into a curse? No, let them come, rather! Or what do you think, Christine?

Christine. I dare not think at all.

Lars (goes out for a moment, but returns quickly). Oh, it is horrible! They have fallen asleep over their dice and their tumblers. And by such as those my mother is to be prepared for her death!

Christine. But why not tell her the truth?

Lars. She won't believe it, and it is cast back on us as a lie.

Mother. My son, won't you listen to your mother's last request?

Lars (going out). May God forgive me!

Christine. Olof would never have done that!

(Lars returns with Mårten and Nils, whereupon he leads Christine out of the room.)

Mårten (going up to the bed). She's sleeping.

Nils (places a box on the floor, opens it, and begins to take out aspersorium, censer, chrismatory, palms, and candles). That means we can't go to work yet.

Mårten. If we have waited all this time, we can afford to wait a little longer—provided that damned priest doesn't show up.

Nils. Master Olof, you mean?—Do you think that fellow out there noticed anything?

Mårten. What do I care? As soon as the old woman gives up the coin, I am free.

Nils. You 're a pretty thorough-paced rascal, you are!

Mårten. Yes, but I am getting tired of it. I am beginning to long for peace. Do you know what life is?

Nils. No.

Mårten. Pleasure! "The flesh was God!" Isn't that the way it's written somewhere?

Nils. "The Word became flesh," you mean?

Mårten. Oh, yes—of course!

Nils. You might have been it pretty big man, with your head!

Mårten. Yes, indeed! That's what they feared, and that's why they whipped the soul out of my body in the convent—for after all I had a soul once! But now there's nothing but body left, and now the body is going to have its turn.

Nils. And I suppose they whipped all conscience out of you at the same time?

Mårten. Well, practically.—But now I want that recipe for spiced Rochelle which you were talking of when we fell asleep out there.

Nils. Did I say Rochelle? I meant claret. That is, it can be either the one or the other. Well, you take a gallon of wine and half a pound of cardamom that has been well

cleaned—

Mårten. Hush—damn you! She is moving. Out with the book!

Nils (keeps on reading in an undertone during the following scene).

Aufer immensam, Deus aufer iram; Et cruentatum cohibe flagellum Nec scelus nostrum proferes ad aequam Pendere lancem.

Mother. Is that you, Mårten?

Mårten. It's Brother Nils praying to the Holy Virgin. (Nils lights the censer without interrupting his reading.)

Mother. What a precious boon to hear the word of the Lord in the sacred tongue!

Mårten. No sweeter sacrifice is known to God than the prayers of pious souls.

Mother. Like the incense, my heart is set on fire with holy devotion.

Mårten (sprinkling her with holy water). The stains of sin are by your God washed off!

Mother. Amen!—Mårten, I am passing away—The godlessness of the King makes it impossible for me by earthly gifts to strengthen the Holy Church in her power of saving souls. You are a pious man—take my property and pray for me and for my children. Pray that the Almighty may turn their hearts away from all lies, so that some time we may meet again in heaven.

Mårten (taking the bag of money she hands him). Goodwife, your sacrifice is acceptable to the Lord, and for your sake my prayers will be heard by God.

Mother. I want to sleep awhile in order to be strong enough to receive the last sacrament.

Mårten. No one shall disturb your final moments—not even those who were your children once.

Mother. It seems cruel, Father Mårten, but it's the will of God. (She falls asleep; Mårten and Nils withdraw from the bed.)

Mårten (opening the bag and kissing the gold coins). What stores of pleasure lie hidden beneath the hardness of this gold—Ah!

Nils. Are we going now?

Mårten. Oh, we might, as our errand here is done, but I think it would be a pity to let the old woman die unsaved.

Nils. Unsaved?

Mårten. Yes!

Nils. Do you believe in that?

Mårten. It's hard to know what one is to believe nowadays. One dies happily in this faith, and another in that. All assert that they have found the truth.

Nils. And if you were to die now, Mårten?

Mårten. That's out of the question!

Nils. But if?

Mårten. Then I suppose I should go to heaven like the rest. But I should prefer to settle a small account with Master Olof first. You see, there is one pleasure that surpasses all the rest, and that's the pleasure of revenge.

Nils. What has he done to you?

Mårten. He has dared to see through me; he has exposed me; he can read what I am thinking—Oh!

Nils. And that's why you hate him?

Mårten. Isn't that enough? (Somebody is heard knocking on the door leading to the street.) Somebody is coming! Read, damn you!

(Nils begins to drone out the same verse as before. The sound of a key being inserted in the lock is heard. The door is opened from the outside.)

[Enter Olof, looking greatly agitated.]

Mother (waking up). Father Mårten!

Olof (goes to the bed). Here is your son, mother! Why didn't you let me know that you were sick?

Mother. Farewell, Olof! I forgive you all the evil you have done to me, if you will not disturb the few moments I need to prepare myself for heaven. Father Mårten! Bring here the sacred ointment, so that I may die in peace.

Olof. So that's why you didn't call me! (He catches sight of the money bag which Mårten has forgotten to hide, and snatches it away from the monk.) Oh, souls are being bartered here! And this was to be the price! Leave this room and this death-bed! Here is my place, not yours!

Mårten. You mean to prevent us from fulfilling our office?

Olof. I am showing you the door!

Mårten. As long as we are not suspended, we are doing our duty here by the King's authority, and not by the Pope's.

Olof. I shall cleanse the Church of the lord without regard to the will of King or Pope.

Mother. Will you plunge my soul into perdition, Olof? Will you let me die with a curse?

Olof. Calm yourself, mother! You are not going to die in a lie. Seek your God in prayer, He is not so far away as you believe.

Mårten. A man who won't save his own mother from the pangs of purgatory must be the Devil's prophet indeed.

Mother. Christ Jesu, help my soul!

Olof. Will you leave this room, or must I use force? Take away that rubbish! (He kicks the ritual accessories across the floor.)

Mårten. I'll go if you'll let me have the money your mother has given to the Church.

Mother. So that's why you came, Olof? You wanted my gold! Let him have it, Mårten. I'll let you have all of it, Olof, if you will only leave me in peace! I'll give you more than that! I'll let you have everything!

Olof (driven to despair). In God's name, take the money and go! I beg you!

Mårten (grabbing the bag and going out with Nils). Where the Devil is abroad, there our power ends, Dame Christine! (To Olof.) As a heretic you are lost for all eternity! As a law-breaker you will get your punishment right here! Beware of the King! [Exeunt.]

Olof (kneeling beside his mother's bed). Mother, listen to me before you die! (The Mother has lost consciousness.) Mother, mother, if you are alive, speak to your son! Forgive me, but I could not act except as I have done. I know you have been suffering all your life for my sake. You have been praying to God that I should keep His paths. The Lord has heard your prayer. Do you want me now to render your whole life futile? Do you want me now, by obeying you, to destroy that structure which has cost you so much in toil and tears? Forgive me!

Mother. Olof, my soul is no longer of this world—it's out of another life I speak to you: turn back! Break that unclean bond which ties your body only. Take back the faith you got from me, and I will forgive you!

Olof (weeping bitterly). Mother! Mother!

Mother. Swear that you will do it!

Olof (after long silence). No!

Mother. The curse of God is upon you—I see Him—I see His angry look—Help me, Holy Virgin!

Olof. That is not the God of love!

Mother. It is the God of retribution!—It is you who have provoked His ire—and it is you who now cast me into the flames of His wrath!—Cursed be the hour when I

bore you! (She dies.)

Olof. Mother! Mother! (He takes her hand.) She's dead! And she has not forgiven me!—Oh, if your soul be still within this room, behold your son: I will do your will, and what was sacred to you shall be sacred to me! (He lights the tall wax candles left behind by the friars and places them around the bed.) You shall have the consecrated candles that are to light your road. (He puts a palm leaf in her hand.) And with this palm of peace shall come forgetfulness of that last struggle with what was earthly. Oh, mother, if you see me now, then you must forgive me! (In the meantime the sun has risen, and the red glow of its first rays lights up the curtains; at the sight of it, Olof leaps to his feet.) You make my candles fade, O morning sun! You have more love than I! (He goes to the window and opens it.)

Lars (entering softly and looking around surprised). Olof!

Olof (putting his arms around him). Brother, all is over! Lars (goes to the bed and kneels for a moment; then he rises again). She is dead! (He prays silently.) You were here alone?

Olof. It was you who let in the monks.

Lars. And you who drove them out.

Olof. That should have been your task.

Lars. She forgave you?

Olof. She died with a curse on her lips. (Pause.)

Lars (pointing to the candles). Who arranged these ceremonies? (Pause.)

Olof (irritated and humiliated). I weakened for a moment.

Lars. So you are human, after all? I thank you for it!

Olof. Are you mocking my weakness?

Lars. I am praising it.

Olof. And I am cursing it!—God in heaven, am I not right?

Lars. No, you are wrong.

[Enter Christine while Lars is still speaking.]

Christine. You are too much in the right!

Olof. Christine, what are you doing here?

Christine. It was so silent and lonesome at home.

Olof. I asked you not to come here.

Christine. I thought I might be of some use, but I see now—Another time I shall stay at home.

Olof. You have been awake all night?

Christine. That is nothing! I will go now if you tell me to!

Olof. Go in there and rest a little while we talk. (Christine begins absentmindedly to extinguish the candles.)

Olof. What are you doing, dear?

Christine. Why, it is full daylight.

(Lars gives Olof a significant glance.)

Olof. My mother is dead, Christine.

Christine (as she goes to Olof to let him kiss her on the forehead, the look on her face is compassionate but cold). I am sorry for your loss. [Exit Christine.]

(Pause. The brothers look for a moment in the direction where she disappeared, then at each other.)

Lars. I beg you, Olof, as your friend and brother, don't go on as you have been doing.

Olof. The old story! But he who has put his axe to the tree cannot draw back until the tree is down. The King has betrayed our cause. Now I will see what I can do for it.

Lars. The King is wise.

Olof. He is a miser, a traitor, and a protector of the nobility. First he uses me to hunt his game, and then he wants to kick me out.

Lars. He sees farther than you do. If you were to go to three million people, telling them: "Your faith is false; believe my words instead"—do you think it possible that they would at once cast aside their most intimate and most keenly experienced conviction, which until then had been a support to them in sorrow as well as in joy? No, the life of the soul would be in a bad condition, indeed, if all the old things could be disposed of so quickly.

Olof. But it is not so. The whole people is full of doubt. Among the priests there is hardly one who knows what to believe—if he cares to believe anything at all. Everything is ready for the new, and it is only you who are to blame—you weaklings whose consciences will not permit you to sow doubt where nothing but a feeble faith remains.

Lars. Look out, Olof! You wish to play the part of God.

Olof. Well, that is what we must do, for I don't think that He Himself intends to conic down to us any more.

Lars. You are tearing down and tearing down, Olof, so that soon there will be nothing left, and when people ask, "What do we get instead?" you always answer, "Not this," "Not that," but never once do you answer, "This."

Olof. Presumptuous man! Do you think faith can be given by one to another? Do you think that Luther has given us anything new? No! He has merely torn away the screens that had been placed around the light. The new that I want is doubt of the old, not because it is old, but because it is decaying. (Lars points toward their mother's body.) I know what you mean. She was too old, and I thank God that she is dead. Now I am free—only now! God has willed it!

Lars. Either you have lost your senses, or you are a wicked man!

Olof. Don't reproach me! I have as much respect for our mother's memory as you have, but if she had not died now, I don't know how far my sacrifices might have gone. Have you noticed in the springtime, brother, how the fallen leaves of yesteryear cover the ground as if to smother all the young; things that are coming out? What do these do? They push aside the withered leaves, or pass right through them, because they must get up!

Lars. You are right to a certain extent.—Olof, you broke the laws of the Church during a time of lawlessness and unrest. What could be forgiven then must be punished now. Don't force the King to appear worse than he is. Don't let your scorn for the law and your wilfulness force him to punish a man to whom he acknowledges himself indebted.

Olof. Nothing is more wilful than his own rule, and he must learn to tolerate the same thing in others. Tell me you have taken service with the King—are you going to work against me?

Lars. I am.

Olof. Then we are enemies, and that is what I need, for the old ones have disappeared.

Lars. But the tie of blood, Olof—

Olof. I know it only in its source, which is the heart.

Lars. Yet you wept for our mother.

Olof. Weakness, or perhaps a touch of old devotion and gratitude, but not because of the tie of blood. What is it, anyhow?

Lars. You are tired out, Olof.

Olof. Yes, I feel exhausted; I have been awake all night.

Lars. You were so late in coming.

Olof. I was out.

Lars. Your doings seem to shun the daylight.

Olof. The daylight shuns my doings.

Lars. Beware of false apostles of freedom!

Olof (struggling with sleepiness and fatigue). That's a self-contradictory term. Oh, don't talk to me—I can't stand any more. I spoke so much at our meeting—But you don't know about our society—Concordia res parvae crescunt—We mean to continue the Reformation—Gert is a farsighted man—I seem so small beside him—Good-night, Lars! (He falls asleep on a chair.)

Lars (stands looking at him with solicitude). Poor brother—may God protect you! (Resounding blows on the street door are heard.) What's that? (He goes to the window.)

Gert (outside). For God's sake, open!

Lars. Why, it isn't a matter of life and death, Father Gert. [Exit.]

Gert (outside). In God's name, let me in!

[Enter Christine with a blanket.]

Christine. Olof, why are they knocking like that? He's asleep! (She wraps him up in the blanket.) Oh, that I were Sleep, so that you might flee to me when tired out by your struggles!

(The rattle of a heavy cart is heard; then the cart comes to a stop outside the house.).

Olof (waking up with a start). Is it five already?

Christine. No, it is only three.

Olof. Wasn't that a baker's cart I heard?

Christine. I don't know, but I don't think it would make such a noise. (She goes to the window.) Look, Olof! What can this he?

Olof (going to the window). The headsman's cart!—No, it isn't that.

Christine. It is a hearse!

[Enter Lars and Gert.]

Lars. The plague!

All. The plague!

Gert. The plague is here! Christine, my child, leave this house! The angel of death has put his mark upon the gate.

Olof. Who sent the cart?

Gert. The man who put the black cross on the door. No dead body must be left a moment in the house.

Olof. Then Mårten was the angel of death—and all is nothing but a lie.

Gert. Look out of the window, and you'll see that the cart is loaded full. (Blows are heard at the street door again.) You hear! They're waiting!

Olof. Without proper burial? That shall never be!

Lars. Without ceremonies, Olof!

Gert. Come away with me, Christine, from this dreadful place! I'll take you out of the city to some healthier spot.

Christine. I will stay with Olof after this. If you, father, had loved me a little less, you would not have done so much harm.

Gert. Olof, you who have the power, command her to follow me

Olof. I set her free from your tyranny once, you selfish man, and she shall never return to it again.

Gert. Christine, get out of this house, at least!

Christine. Not a step until Olof orders me.

Olof. I will no longer order you at all, Christine—remember that!

[Enter several Buriers.]

Burier. I've come for a body. No time to spare!

Olof. Begone from here!

Burier. The King's order!

Lars. Consider what you do, Olof! The law demands it!

Gert. This is no time to hesitate! The crazy mob is aroused against you. This house was the first one to be marked, and they are crying: "God's punishment upon the heretic!"

Olof (kneeling beside the bed). Mother, forgive! (Rising.) Do your duty!

(The Buriers come forward and begin to get their ropes ready.)

Gert (aside to Olof). "God's punishment upon the King" is our cry!

ACT V

SCENE I

(The Cemetery of the Convent of St. Clara. In the background appears a partly demolished convent building, from which a gang of workmen are carrying out timber and debris. At the left is a mortuary chapel. Its windows are lighted from within, and whenever the door is opened, a brilliantly illuminated crucifix on the chancel wall, with a sarcophagus standing in front of it, becomes visible. A number of the graves have been opened. The moon is just rising from behind the ruined convent. Windrank is seated outside the chapel door. Singing is heard from within the chapel.)

[Enter Nils.]

Nils (goes up to Windrank). Good evening, Windrank.

Windrank. Please don't talk to me.

Nils. What's the matter now?

Windrank. Didn't you hear what I told you?

Nils. Has your scurvy ending as a skipper affected you so badly that you think of turning monk?

Windrank. 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57.

Nils. You haven't lost your reason, have you?

Windrank. 58, 59, 60—In the name of Jesu, get away from here!

Nils. You had better have a little nightcap with me.

Windrank. 64, 65—That's what I expected! Get you gone, tempter! I'll never take a drink again—until the day after to-morrow.

Nils. But it's a fine remedy against the plague, and with all this cadaverous stuff about, you had better be careful.

Windrank. 70—So you really think it's good for the plague?

Nils. Excellent!

Windrank. Only a drop, then! (He drinks from the bottle offered him by Nils.)

Nils. Only a drop! But tell me, are you suffering from vertigo since you are counting to a hundred?

Windrank. Hush! Hush! There's an epoch coming.

Nils. An epoch?

Windrank. Yes, the day after to-morrow.

Nils. And that's why you keep counting like that?

Windrank. No, it's only because I find it so hard to hold my tongue. Now, for heaven's sake, keep quiet! Please go away, or you'll get me into trouble!—71, 72, 73.

Nils. Who's inside?

Windrank. 74, 75.

Nils. Is it a funeral?

Windrank. 76, 77.—Go to hell, won't you!

Nils. Just another tiny drop, and the counting will be easier.

Windrank. Just a little one—I will! (He drinks. Singing is heard outside.)

Nils. Here come the nuns of St. Clara to celebrate the memory of their saint for the last time.

Windrank. That's fine mummery in days like these when everybody is getting educated.

Nils. They have obtained the King's permission. You see, the plague broke out in the parish of St. Clara, and some believe it was because of the godless destruction of St. Clara's convent.

Windrank. And now they mean to drive away the plague with singing—as if that bugaboo were a hater of music. But, of course, it wouldn't be a wonder if he did flee from their hoarse screeching.

Nils. Will you please tell me who has dared to invade this last sanctuary—for it's here the bones of the Saint are to be deposited before the place is torn down entirely.

Windrank. Then there'll be a fight, I fear.

[The singing has drawn nearer. A procession enters, made up of Dominican friars and Franciscan nuns, headed by Mårten. They come to a halt and continue singing, while the workmen are making a great deal of noise in the background.]

Procession. Cur super vermes luteos furorem Sunnis, O magni fabricator orbis! Quid sumus quam fex, putris, umbra, pulvis Glebaque terrae!

Mårten (to the Abbess). You can see, my sister, how the abode of the Lord has been despoiled.

Abbess. The Lord who has delivered us into the hands of the Egyptians will also set its free in due time.

Mårten (to the workmen). Cease working, and do not disturb our pious task!

Overseer. Our orders are to work day and night until this den has been torn down.

Abbess. Alas, that unbelief has spread so far down among the people!

Mårten. We are celebrating this feast with the permission of the King.

Overseer. Well, I don't mind!

Mårten. And therefore I command you to cease your noise. I'll appeal directly to your workmen, whom you have forced into this shameless undertaking.—I'll ask them if they have any respect whatever left for holy—

Overseer. You had better not, for I am in command here. Furthermore, I can tell you that they are glad enough to have a chance of tearing down these hornets' nests for which they themselves have had to pay—and then, too, they are pretty thankful to earn something during a time of famine. (He goes toward the background.)

Mårten. Let us forget the wickedness and tumult of this world. Let us enter the sacred place and pray for them.

Abbess. Lord, Lord, the cities of Thy sanctuary are laid waste! Zion is laid waste, and Jerusalem is lying desolate!

Windrank. 100.—Nobody can get in here!

The Conspirators (within the chapel). We swear!

Mårten. Who has dared to invade the chapel?

Windrank. It's no more a chapel since it has become a royal storehouse.

Abbess. That's why the godless one gave us his permission!

[The door of the chapel is thrown open and the conspirators appear; among them Olof, Lars Andersson, Gert, the German, the Dane, the Man from Smaland, and others.]

Olof (much excited). What kind of buffoonery is this?

Mårten. Make way for the handmaidens of St. Clara!

Olof. Do you think your idols can keep away the plague that God has sent you as a punishment? Do you think the Lord will find those pieces of bone you carry in the box there so pleasant that He forgives all your dreadful sins? Take away that abomination! (He takes the reliquary from the Abbess and throws it into one of the open graves.) From dust you have come, and to dust you shall return, even if your name was Sancta Clara da Spoleto and you ate only three ounces of bread a day and slept among the swine at night! (The nuns scream.)

Mårten. If you fear not what is holy, fear at least your temporal ruler. Look here! He has still so much respect left for divine things that he dreads the wrath of the saint. (He shows a document to Olof.)

Olof. Do you know what the Lord did with the king of the Assyrians when he permitted the worship of idols? He smote him and all his people. Thus the righteous is made to suffer with the unrighteous. In the name of the one omnipotent God, I declare this worship of Baal abolished, even if all the kings of the earth give their permit. The Pope wanted to sell my soul to Satan, but I tore the contract to pieces—you remember? Should I then fear a King who wants to sell his people to the Baalim? (He tears the document to pieces.)

Mårten (to his followers). You are my witnesses that he has defamed the King.

Olof (to his followers). And you are my witnesses before God that I have led the people of a godless King away from him!

Mårten. Listen, ye faithful! It is because of this heretic that God has smitten us with the plague—it is the punishment of God, and it fell first of all on his mother.

Olof. Listen, ye faithless papists! It was the punishment of the Lord on me because I had served Sennacherib against Judah. I will atone my crime by leading Judah against the kings of the Assyrians and the Egyptians.

(The moon has risen in the meantime. It is very red, and a fiery glare pervades the

place. The crowd is frightened.)

Olof (mounting one of the graves). Heaven is weeping blood over your sins and your idolatry. Punishment shall be meted out, for those in authority have fallen into wrongdoing. Can't you see that the very graves are yawning for prey—

(Gert seizes Olof by the arm, whispers to him, and leads him down from the mound. The crowd is panic-stricken.)

Abbess. Give us back our reliquary, so that we may abandon this home of desolation.

Mårten. It is better to let the bones of the Saint remain in this consecrated soil than to have them touched by the vile hands of heretics!

Olof. You are afraid of the plague, cowards that you are! Is your faith in the sacred bones no stronger?

(Gert whispers to Olof again. The procession has in the meantime scattered, so that only a part of it remains on the stage.)

Olof (to Mårten). Now you should be satisfied, you hypocrite! Go and tell him whom you serve that a box of silver is about to be buried here, and he'll dig it out of the earth with his own nails. Tell him that the moon, which is usually made of silver, has turned into gold, merely to make your master raise his eyes toward heaven for once. Tell him that you, by your blasphemous buffooneries, have succeeded in provoking an honest man's wrath—

[Exeunt Mårten and the members of the procession.]

Gert. Enough, Olof! (To all the conspirators except Olof and Lars.) Leave us, please!

[Exeunt the conspirators, exchanging whispers.]

Gert (to Olof and Lars). It's too late to back down now!

Olof. What do you want, Gert—speak!

Gert (showing them a bound volume). Before you two, servants of God, a people steps forth to make its confession. Do you acknowledge your oath?

Olof and Lars. We have sworn!

Gert. This book is the result of my silent labors. On every page you will find a cry of distress, a sigh from thousands who have been blind enough to think it God's will that they should suffer the tyranny of one man—who have thought it their duty not even to hope for liberation. (Olof takes the volume and begins to read.) You shall hear complaints all the way from the primeval forests of Norrland down to the Sound. Out of the wreckage from the churches the King is building new castles for the nobility and new prisons for the people. You shall read how the King is bartering away law and justice by letting murderers escape their punishment if they seek refuge at the salt-works. You shall read how he is taxing vice by letting harlots pay for the right to ply their traffic. Yea, the very fishes of the rivers, the water of the sea itself, have been usurped by him. But the end is in sight. The eyes of the people have been opened. There is seething and fermenting everywhere. Soon the tyranny will be crushed, and the people shall be free!

Olof. Who wrote the songs in this book?

Gert. The people! These are songs of the people—so they sing who feel the yoke pressing. I have visited city and country, asking them: "Are you happy?" These are the answers! I have held assizes. Here are the verdicts entered. Do you believe that a million wills may conquer one? Do you believe that God has bestowed this land with all its human souls and all its property upon a single man, for him to deal with as it suits his pleasure? Or do you not rather believe that he should do the will of all?—You do not answer? You are awed, I see, by the thought that it may come to an end! Listen to my confession! Tomorrow the oppressor dies, and you shall all be free!

Olof and Lars. What are you saying?

Gert. You didn't understand what I was talking about at our meetings.

Olof. You have deceived us!

Gert. Not at all! You are perfectly free. Two voices less mean nothing. Everything is prepared.

Lars. Have you considered the consequences?

Gert. Fool! Is it not for the sake of the consequences that I have done all this?

Olof. Supposing Gert be right—what do you say, Lars?

Lars. I wasn't born to lead.

Olof. All are born to lead, but all are not willing to sacrifice the flesh.

Gert. Only he who has the courage to face scorn and ridicule can lead. For hatred is as nothing compared with the laughter that kills.

Olof. And if it should miscarry?

Gert. Dare to face that, too! You don't know that Thomas Münster has established a new spiritual kingdom at Muhlhausen. You don't know that all Europe is in revolt. Who was Dacke, if not a defender of the oppressed? What have the Dalecarlians meant by all their rebellions, if not to defend their freedom against him who broke his plighted faith? He does such things and goes unpunished, but when they want to defend themselves, then he raises the cry of revolt and treason.

Olof. So this is the point to which you wanted to lead me, Gert?

Gert. Have you not been led here by the current? You will, but do not dare! To-morrow, in the church, the mine will go off, and that will be a signal for the people to rise and choose a ruler after their own heart.

Olof (turning over the leaves of the book). If it be the will of all, then nobody can stop it. Gert, let me take this book to the King and show him what is the will of his people, and he will grant them their rights.

Gert. Oh, you child! For a moment he may be scared, and perhaps restore a silver

pitcher to some church. Then he'll point toward heaven and say: "It is not by my own will that I sit here and do you wrong, but by the will of God!"

Olof. Then the will of God be done!

Gert. But how?

Olof. He must die that all may live. Murderer, ingrate, traitor—those will be my names, perchance. I am sacrificing everything, even my honor, my conscience, and my faith—could I possibly give more for those pitiable ones who are crying for salvation? Let us go ere I repent!

Gert. Even if you did, it would already be too late. Don't you know that Mårten is a spy, and perhaps sentence has already been pronounced against the rebel!

Olof. Well, I won't repent—and why should I repent of an act that implies the carrying out of God's own judgment? Forward, then, in the name of the Lord. [Exeunt.]

[Enter Harlot, who kneels at a grave which she has strewn with flowers.]

Harlot. Hast Thou punished me enough now, O Lord, to pardon me?

[Enter Christine quickly.]

Christine. Have you seen Master Olof, goodwife?

Harlot. Are you his friend or his enemy?

Christine. Do you mean to insult me?

Harlot. Pardon me! I haven't seen him since the last time I prayed.

Christine. You look so sorrowful! Oh, I know you now! It was you to whom Olof was talking that night in Greatchurch.

Harlot. You mustn't let it be seen that you are talking to me. You don't know who I am, do you?

Christine. Oh, yes, I know.

Harlot. You know—so they have told you?

Christine. Olof told me.

Harlot. O my God! And don't you despise me?

Christine. You are an unfortunate, down-trodden woman, Olof told me. Why should I despise misfortune?

Harlot. Then you cannot be happy yourself?

Christine. No, we have shared the same fate.

Harlot. I am not the only one, then! Tell me, who was the worthless man to whom you gave your love?

Christine. Worthless?

Harlot. Oh, pardon—to one who loves, no one seems worthless! To whom did you give your love?

Christine. You know Master Olof, don't you?

Harlot. Oh, tell me that it is not true! Don't rob me of my faith in him, too! It is the only thing I have left since God took my child!

Christine. You have had a child? Then you have been happy once.

Harlot. I thank God, who did not permit my son to find out the unworthiness of his mother.

Christine. Have you been guilty of any crime, that you speak so?

Harlot. I have just buried it.

Christine. Your child? How can you! And I pray God every day to grant me a little one—so that I may at least have one creature to love!

Harlot. Oh, poor child, pray to God that He preserve you from it!

Christine. I don't understand you, goodwife!

Harlot. Don't call me that! You know who I am, don't you?

Christine. Well, don't they offer prayers in the churches for those who have hopes?

Harlot. Not for such as we!

Christine. Such as we?

Harlot. They pray for the others and curse us.

Christine. What do you mean by "the others"? I don't understand you at all.

Harlot. Do you know the wife of Master Olof?

Christine. Why, that is I!

Harlot. You? Oh, why didn't I guess at once? Can you forgive me a moment's doubt? How could vice look like you and him? Alas! You must leave me. You are a child, still ignorant of wickedness. You must not be talking to me longer. God bless you! Good-bye! (She starts to leave.)

Christine. Don't leave me! Whoever you be, for God's sake, stay! They have broken into our house, and my husband is not to be found. Take me away from here—home to yourself—anywhere. You must be a good woman—you cannot be wicked—

Harlot (interrupting her). If I tell you that the brutality of the crowd wouldn't hurt you half so much as my company, then perhaps you will forgive me for leaving—

Christine. Who are you?

Harlot. I am an outcast on whom has been fulfilled that curse which God hurled at woman after the fall of our first parents. Ask me no more, for if I told you more, your contempt would goad me to a self-defence that would be still more contemptible.—Here comes somebody who perhaps will be generous enough to escort you, if you promise to let him have your honor and virtue and eternal peace for his trouble—for that is probably the least he will accept for his protection at such a late hour as this! Please forgive me—it is not at you that I am railing.

[Enter Windrank, intoxicated.]

Windrank. Why the devil can't a fellow be left alone, even here among the corpses?

See here, my good ladies, please don't ask me anything, for now I can't guarantee that I won't answer. The day after to-morrow I'll tell you all about it, for then it'll be too late. Perhaps you're some of those nuns that have been made homeless? Well, although women are nothing but women, I don't think I have any right to be impolite, for all that the sun set long ago. Of course, there is an old law saying that nobody can be arrested after sunset, but though the law is a bugbear, I think it's too polite to insist on anything when it's a question of ladies. Hush, hush, tongue! Why, the old thing is going like a spinning-wheel, but that comes from that infernal gin! Why should I be dragged into this kind of thing? Of course, I'll get well paid and be a man of means, but don't believe that I am doing it for the sake of the money! It's done now, but I don't want to—I don't want to! I want to sleep in peace nights and have no ghosts to trouble me. Suppose I goo and tell? No, then they'll arrest me. Suppose somebody else would go and tell? Perhaps one of you nuns might be so kind as to do it?

Christine (who has been conferring with the Harlot). If you have anything on your conscience that troubles you, please tell us.

Windrank. Am I to tell? That's just what I want to get out of, but this is horrible, and I can't stand it any longer. I am forced to do it. Why should I be the one? I don't want to.

Christine. My dear man, you mean to commit—

Windrank. A murder. Who told you? Well, thank God that you know! By all means, go ahead and tell about it—at once—or I'll have no peace—no peace in all eternity!

Christine (recovering from the first shock). Why should you murder him?

Windrank. Oh, there are such a lot of reasons. Just look at the way he is tearing down your nunneries.

Christine. The King?

Windrank. Yes, of course! The father and liberator of his country! Of course, he's an

oppressor, but that's no reason why he should be murdered.

Christine. When is it going to happen?

Windrank. Why, to-morrow—in Greatchurch—right in church! [At a signal from Christine, the Harlot leaves.]

Christine. How could they pick you for such a deed?

Windrank. Well, you see, I gave a connection or two among the church attendants, and then I am poor, of course. What the devil does it matter who puts the match to the powder, if only some shrewd fellow is pointing the gun? And then we have several other little schemes in reserve, although I'm to fire the first shot. But why don't you run off and tell about it?

Christine. It has already been done.

Windrank. Well, God be thanked and praised! Goodbye, there goes all my money!

Christine. Tell me who you are, you conspirators.

Windrank. No, that I won't tell!

[Enter Nils. He crosses the stage followed by a troop of soldiers and a crowd of people.]

Christine. Do you see that they are already looking for you?

Windrank. I wash my hands of it.

Nils (goes up to Windrank without noticing Christine). Have you seen Olof Pedersson?

Windrank. Why?

Nils. Because he is wanted.

Windrank. No, I haven't seen him. Are there others wanted?

Nils. Yes, many.

Windrank. No, I haven't seen any of them.

Nils. Well, it will soon be your turn. [Exit.]

Christine. Are they looking for the conspirators?

Windrank. What a question! Now I'm going to clear out. Good-bye!

Christine. Tell me before you go—

Windrank. Haven't time!

Christine. Is Master Olof one of them?

Windrank. Of course! (Christine sinks down unconscious on one of the graves. Windrank is suddenly sobered and genuinely moved.) Good Lord in heaven, it must be his wife! (He goes to Christine.) I think I've killed her! Oh, Hans, Hans, all you can do now is to get a rope for yourself! What business did you have to get mixed up with the high and mighty?—Come here, somebody, and help a poor woman!

[Enter Olof, led by soldiers carrying torches as he catches sight of Christine, he tears himself loose and throws himself on his knees beside her.]

Olof. Christine!

Christine. Olof! You're alive! Come away from here and let us go home!

Olof (overwhelmed). It's too late!

SCENE 2

(Within Greatchurch. Olof and Gert, dressed as penitents, stand in the pillory near the entrance. The organ is playing and the bells are ringing. The service is just ended, and the people are leaving the church. The Sexton and his wife are standing by themselves in a corner near the footlights.)

Sexton. Lars the Chancellor, he was pardoned, but not Master Olof.

Wife. The Chancellor has always been a man of peace and has never stirred up any trouble, so I can't understand how he could want to have anything to do with such dreadful things.

Sexton. The Chancellor has always had a queer streak, although he has never said much, and though he was pardoned, it cost him everything he had. I can't help being sorry for Master Olof; I have always had a liking for him, even though he has been a fire-brand.

Wife. Well, what's the use of making a young fellow like that pastor?

Sexton. Of course, he's rather young, and that has been his main fault, but I'm sure time will cure it.

Wife. What nonsense you are talking, seeing that he's going to die to-day.

Sexton. Well, Lord, Lord, if I hadn't clean forgotten about it! But then it doesn't seem quite right to me, either.

Wife. Do you know if he has repented?

Sexton. I doubt very much, for I am sure his neck is just as stiff as ever.

Wife. But I suppose he'll thaw out a little now, when he sees his class of children whom they wouldn't let him prepare for confirmation.

Sexton. Well, I must say that the King can be pretty mean when he turns that side to. Now he is making the pastor do church penance the very same day his children are being confirmed. It's almost as bad as when he made the dean drink with the headsman, or when he sent those two prelates riding through the city with crowns of birch bark on their heads.

Wife. And his own brother Lars has been sent to shrive him.

Sexton. See, here come the children! How sad they're looking—well, I don't wonder. I think I'll have to go in and have a cry myself—

(Enter the children about to be confirmed, boys and girls. They begin to march past Olof, carrying bunches of flowers in their hands. They look sad and keep their eyes on the ground. A number of older people accompany the children. A few curious persons point out Olof and are rebuked by others. Last of all the children in the

procession comes Vilhelm, one of the scholars with whom Olof was seen playing in the First Act. He stops timidly in front of him, kneels, and drops his bunch of flowers at the feet of Olof, who does not notice it because he has pulled down the hood of his penitential robe so that it hides his face. Some of the people mutter disapprovingly, while others show signs of pleasure. Mårten comes forward to take away the flowers, but is pushed back by the crowd. Soldiers clear a path for Lars Pedersson, who appears in canonicals. The crowd disappears gradually, leaving Lars, Olof, and Gert alone on the stage. The playing of the organ ceases, but the bells continue to toll.)

Lars. Olof, the King has refused to listen to the petition for pardon submitted by the City Corporation. Are you prepared to die?

Olof. I am not able to think so far.

Lars. I have been ordered to prepare you.

Olof. That will have to be done in haste, for my blood is still running quickly through my veins.

Lars. Have you repented?

Olof. No!

Lars. Do you want to pass into eternity with an unforgiving mind?

Olof. Oh, put aside the formulas, if you want me to listen to you. I can't think that I am going to die now—there 's far too much of life and strength left in me.

Lars. I must tell you that I don't think so either, and that it is for a new life in this world I am trying to prepare you.

Olof. Then I may live?

Lars. If you will admit that you were mistaken in the past, and if you will take back what you have said about the King.

Olof. How could I? That would be to die indeed!

Lars. This was what I had to tell you. Now you must decide for yourself.

Olof. One doesn't parley about one's convictions.

Lars. Even a mistake may turn into conviction. I shall leave you to think the matter over. [Exit.]

Gert. Our harvest wasn't ready. It takes a lot of snow to make the fall crops ripen—nay, centuries must pass before you will even see the first shoots. All the conspirators are under arrest, they say, and te deums are sung on that account. But they are mistaken; conspirators are abroad everywhere—in the royal apartments, in the churches, and in the market-places—but they dare not do what we have dared. And yet they'll reach that point some time. Good-bye, Olof! You must live a little longer, for you are young. I shall die with the utmost pleasure. The name of every new martyr becomes the rallying-cry for a new host. Don't believe that a human soul was ever set on fire by a lie. Don't ever distrust those feelings that shake you to your inmost soul when you have seen some one suffer spiritual or physical oppression. If the whole world tell you that you are wrong, believe your own heart just the same—if you are brave enough to do so. The day when you deny your self—then you are dead, and eternal perdition will seem a mercy to one who, has been guilty of the sin against the Holy Ghost.

Olof. You speak of my release as though it were a certainty.

Gert. The Corporation has offered 500 ducats for your ransom, and if it cost only 2000 to get Birgitta declared a saint, then 500 should suffice to get you declared guiltless. The King doesn't dare to take your life!

[Enter the Lord High Constable, followed by the Headsman and soldiers.]

Constable. Take away Gert the Printer.

Gert (to Olof, as he is being led away). Good-bye, Olof! Take care of my daughter, and don't ever forget the great Whitsunday!

Constable. Master Olof, you are a young man who has been led astray. The King will pardon you for the sake of your youth, but as a safeguard he demands a retraction wherein you take back whatever you have ventured beyond and against his orders.

Olof. Then the King is still in need of me?

Constable. There are many more who need you, but don't rely on his mercy until you have fulfilled his condition. Here is the King's warrant. In a moment your fetters may be shed, if so be your will, but it will be just as easy to tear up this sheet of paper.

Olof. One who contents himself with 500 ducats is not likely to care very much for a retraction—

Constable. That is a lie! The headsman is waiting for you. But pray listen to a few words from an old man. I, too, have been young, and moved by strong passions. They belong to youth; but those passions are meant to be killed. I did as you do. I went around telling the truth, and all I got in return was ingratitude, or, at the best, a smile of derision. I, too, wanted to build a little heaven here on earth—(speaking with marked emphasis) of course, on other foundations than yours—but soon I came to my senses, and the chimeras were sent packing. I have no desire to make you out a man wishing to gain notoriety by getting himself talked about—I don't believe anything of the kind. You are moved by good intentions, but they are such as must cause harm. Your blood is hot, and it blinds you because you exercise no self-control. You preach freedom, and you are plunging thousands into the slavery of license. Retrace your steps, young man, and make atonement for your errors! Restore what you have torn down, and your fellow-men will bless you!

Olof (agitated to a point of desperation). It is the truth you speak; I hear it, but who taught you to speak like that?

Constable. Experience—that which you lack!

Olof. Can I have lived and fought for a lie? Must I now declare my whole youth and the best part of my manhood lost, useless, wasted? Oh, let me rather die together with my mistake!

Constable. You should have broken loose from your dreams earlier. But calm yourself! Your life is still ahead of you. The past has been a school—hard, to be sure, but all the more wholesome. Hitherto you have given your life to whims and follies. Now you have some inkling of what reality demands of you. Outside that door your creditors are waiting with their claims. Here are their bills. The clergy of the young Church demand that you live to finish what you have begun so splendidly. The City Corporation demands its secretary for the Council. The congregation demands its shepherd. The children of the confirmation class demand their teacher. Those are your legal creditors. But there is one more waiting outside, to whom perhaps you owe more than all the rest, and who yet demands nothing at all—your young wife. You have torn her from her father's side and set her adrift in the storm. You have broken down her childhood faith and filled her mind with restlessness. Your reckless deeds have goaded the brutal mob into driving her out of her own home. Yet she does not even demand your love: all she asks of you is permission to spend a life of suffering by your side.—Now you can see that we, too, give a little consideration to other people, although you call us selfish.—Let me open this door, which will lead you back into the world. Discipline your heart before it hardens, and thank God for granting you more time to work for mankind.

Olof (breaking into tears). I am lost!

(Constable gives a sign to the Headsman, who removes the fetters and the garb of penitence from Olof; then the Constable opens the door to the sacristy, and delegates from the lords, the clergy, and the city guilds enter.)

Constable. Olof Pedersson, formerly pastor of the city church at Stockholm, do you hereby repent of your misdeeds and retract what you have said beyond and against

the King's order? Do you declare your willingness to keep your oath to the sovereign of this realm, and to serve him faithfully?

(Olof remains silent. Lars Pedersson and Christine approach him, while many of those present make pleading gestures.)

Olof (in a cold and determined voice). Yes!

Constable. In the name of the King, I set you free!

(Olof and Christine embrace. A number of persons come forward to press his hand and utter words of congratulation.)

Olof (in the same cold voice). Before I leave this room, let me be alone a moment with my God. I need it! Once upon a time I struck the first blow right here, and here—

Lars. Right here you have won your greatest victory this very day!

(All leave the room except Olof, who falls on his knees.)

[Enter Vilhelm cautiously. He looks very much surprised at seeing Olof alone and free.]

Vilhelm. I come to bid you farewell, Master Olof, before you pass on to another life.

Olof (rising). You have not deserted me, Vilhelm! Help me, then, to mourn those happy moments of my youth that are now nothing but a memory!

Vilhelm. Before you die I want to thank you for all that you have done for us. It was I who gave you those flowers, which you haven't noticed.—They have been trampled on, I see. I wanted to bring you a reminder of the days when we were playing under the lindens in the convent close at Strängnäs. I thought it might do you good to hear that we have never thanked God, as you said we would, because you didn't return to us. We have never forgotten you, for it was you who relieved us of those cruel penances, and it was you who flung open the heavy convent doors and gave us back our freedom and the blue sky and the happiness of living. Why you

must die, we do not know, but you could never do anything wrong. And if you die because you have rendered help to some of those that were oppressed, as they tell us, then you should not be sorry, although it hurts very, very much. Once you told us how Hus was burned because he had dared to tell the truth to those in power. You told us how he went to the stake and joyfully commended himself into the hands of God, and how he prophesied about the swan that should come singing new songs in praise of awakened freedom. That's the way I have thought that you would meet your death—with your head thrown back, and your eyes toward the sky, and the people crying: "So dies a witness!"

(Olof leans against the pillory, his face showing how the words of Vilhelm strike home to him.)

Gert (his voice heard from a distant part of the church.) Renegade!

(Olof sinks down overwhelmed at the foot of the pillory.)

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK MASTER OLOF: A DRAMA IN FIVE ACTS ***

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