The Fisher Girl

by Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson

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THE

FISHER GIRL

BY

BJÖRNSTJERNE BJÖRNSON.

TRANSLATED FROM THE NORWEGIAN

BY

SIVERT AND ELIZABETH HJERLEID.

(Translators of Ovind.)

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TRANSLATORS' PREFACE.

Encouraged by the general appreciation with which our former translation "Ovind" was received last winter, we now offer to the English reader what we believe to be a faithful re-production of Herr Björnson's latest work. The poems are rendered in the metre of the original, and as in "Ovind" we have taken the liberty of adding headings to the chapters.

North Ormesby,

Middlesbrough,

December, 1870.

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CHAPTER I.

PEER, PETER, AND PEDRO.

When the herring has for a long time frequented a coast, by degrees, if other circumstances admit of it, there springs up a town. Not only of such towns may it be said, that they are cast up out of the sea, but from a distance they look like washed-up timber and wrecks, or like a mass of upturned boats that the fishermen have drawn over for shelter some stormy night; as one draws nearer, one sees how accidentally the whole has been built, mountains rising in the midst of the thoroughfare, or the hamlet separated by water into three, four divisions, while the streets crook and crawl. One condition only is common to them all, there is safety in the harbour for the largest ship; there is shelter and calm, and the ships find these enclosures grateful, when with torn sails and broken bulwarks, they come driving in from the North Sea to seek for breathing space.

Such a little town is quiet; all the noise there is, is directed to the quay, where the boats of the peasants are moored, and the ships are loading and unloading. The only street in our little town lies along the quay, the white and red painted, one and two-storied houses follow this, yet not house to house, but with pretty gardens in between; consequently it is a long broad street, which, when the wind is landward, smells of that which is on the quay.

It is quiet here,--not from fear of the police, for, as a rule, there is none,--but from

fear of report, as everybody knows everybody. If you go along the street, you must bow at every window, for there sits an old lady ready to bow again. Besides you must bow to those you meet, for all these quiet people are thinking what is becoming to the inhabitants in general, and to themselves in particular. He who oversteps the bounds where his standing or position is placed, loses his good reputation; for you know not only him, but his father and grandfather and you seek out where there has been a tendency in the family before to that which is unbecoming.

Many years since to this quiet little town came the well esteemed man, Peer Olsen; he came from the country, where he had lived as a small stall keeper and by playing the violin. In this town he opened a little shop for his old customers, where besides other wares he sold brandy and bread. One could hear him going backwards and forwards in the room behind the shop, playing spring dances and wedding marches; every time he passed the door he peeped through the glass pane, when, if he saw a customer, he finished up with a trill, and went in. Trade went well, he married and got a son, whom he named after himself, yet not Peer but Peter. Little Peter should be what Peer felt HE was not, an educated man, so the lad was sent to the Latin school. Now when those who should have been his companions, thrust him out of their play because he was the son of Peer Olsen, Peer Olsen turned him out to them again, as that was the only way for the boy to learn manners. Little Peter, therefore, feeling himself forsaken at the school, grew idle, and gradually became so indifferent to everything, that his father could neither thrash smiles nor tears out of him, so the father gave up struggling with him and put him in the shop. How astonished then--was he not? when he saw the lad give to each customer what he asked for, without a grain too much, never even touching so much as a raisin himself preferring not to talk, but weighing, counting, entering, without any change of countenance, very slowly, but with scrupulous exactness. His father's hopes began to revive, and he sent him with a fishing smack to Hamburg, to enter a Merchant's College, and to learn fine manners; he was away eight months, that must surely be

sufficient. When he came back he had provided himself with six new suits of clothes, and on landing he put one suit on the top of another, for "things in actual wear are exempt from duty." But thickness excepted, he made about the same figure in the street next day. He walked straight or stiff with his arms perpendicular, shook hands with a sudden jerk, and bowed as if without joints to be at once stiff again; he had become politeness itself, but everything was done without uttering a word, and quickly, with a certain shyness. He did not sign his name Olsen any more, but Ohlsen, which led the wits of the town to ask, "How far did Peter Ohlsen get in Hamburg?" Answer: "As far as the first letter." He even went so far as to think of calling himself Pedro, but he had to brook so much annoyance for the h's sake, that he gave it up and signed himself P. Ohlsen. He extended the business, and though only twenty-two, he married a red-handed shop girl, for his father had just become a widower, and it was safer to have a wife than a housekeeper. That day year he got a son, who that day week was named Pedro. When worthy Peer Olsen became a grandfather, he felt an inward calling to grow old. Therefore he left the business to his son, sat outside upon a bench, and smoked twist tobacco from a short pipe; and when one day he began to grow tired of sitting there, he wished he might soon die, and even as all his wishes had quietly been fulfilled, so also was this.

If the son Peter had inherited exclusively the one feature of his father's character, aptitude for business, the grandson Pedro seemed to have inherited the other exclusively--talent for music. He was very slow in learning to read, but quick in learning to sing, and he played the flute so exquisitely that one might easily perceive he was of a refined and susceptible nature. But this was only a trouble to the father, as if the boy should be brought up to his own busy exactness. Then, when he forgot anything, he was not scolded nor thrashed as the father had been, but he was pinched. It was done very quietly, and with a kindness one might almost call polite, but it was done on every possible occasion. Every night when she undressed him, the mother counted the blue and yellow marks, and kissed them, but she offered no

resistance, for she was pinched herself. For every tear in his clothes, (the father's Hamburg suits made up again,) for every blot on his copy-book she was to blame. So it was constantly: "Don't do that, Pedro!" "Take care, Pedro!" "Remember, Pedro!" He was afraid of his father, and his mother wearied him. He did not suffer much from his companions, as he cried directly, and begged them not to spoil his clothes, so they called him, "Withered stick!" and took no more notice of him. He was like a weak featherless duckling, limping after the rest, and waddling to one side with the little bit he could catch for himself, nobody shared with him, and therefore he shared with nobody.

But he soon observed that it was different with the poorer children of the town; for they bore with him because he was better dressed than themselves. The leader of the flock was a tall powerful girl, who took him under her special protection. He never tired of looking at her, she had raven black hair, all in one curl that was never combed except with the fingers; she had deep blue eyes, short brow; the expression of her face acted simultaneously. She was full of activity, and excitable; in the summer, bare-footed, bare-armed, and sunburnt; in the winter, clad as others in summer. Her father was a pilot and fisherman, she flew about and sold his fish; she rigged his boat, and when he was out as a pilot she went fishing alone. Every one who saw her turned to look again, she was so self-reliant. Her name was Gunlaug, but she was called "The Fisher Girl," a title she accepted as if by rank. In games she took the weaker side; it was a necessity of her nature to have something to care for, and now she cared for this delicate boy.

In her boat he could play his flute, that had been banished at home because they fancied it drew his thoughts from his lessons. She rowed him out into the fiord; then she took him with her on her longer fishing expeditions; and by-and-bye also on the night fishing. At sunset they rowed out into the light summer stillness, when he would play his flute, or listen to her as she told him all she knew about the mermen, dragons, shipwrecks, strange lands and black people, as she had heard it from the

sailors. She shared her viands with him as she shared her knowledge, and he received all without giving anything in return, for he had no provisions with him from home, and no imagination from the school. They rowed till the sun went down behind the snowcapped mountains, then they drew to shore on some rocky island, and kindled a fire, i.e. she gathered branches and sticks, while he looked on. She had bundled along a sailor's jacket of her father's and a rug for him, and in these he was wrapped. She kept up the fire, while he fell asleep; she kept herself awake by singing snatches of psalms and songs; she sang in a full clear voice until he slept--then softly. When the sun rose again on the other side, and as a harbinger, cast his pale yellow rays before him over the mountains, she awoke him. The forest was still black, the fields were dark, but changing to a brown red and shimmering, until the ridge top glowed, and all the colours came rushing. Then they pushed the boat in the water again, cut through the waves in the sharp morning breeze, and were soon aground with the fishermen.

When winter came and the fishing tours were given up, he sought her in her own home; he often came and watched her while she worked, but neither of them spoke much; it was as if they sat together and waited for the summer. When summer came, however, this new object in life was unfortunately also gone; Gunlaug's father died; she left the town, and, at the suggestion of the schoolmaster, the lad was placed in the shop. There he stood together with his mother, for his father, who little by little had taken the colour of the grains he weighed, had to keep his bed in the back room. From there he must yet take part in everything, must know what each especially had sold, then appeared not to hear, till he got them so near that he could pinch them. And one night when the wick had become quite dry in this little lamp, it went out. The wife wept without exactly knowing why, but the son could not pinch a tear. As they had sufficient to live on, they gave up the business, swept away every reminder, and converted the shop into a parlour. There the mother sat in the window and knitted stockings; Pedro sat in the room on the other side of the passage, and played

his flute. But as soon as the summer came he bought a light little sailing-boat, drove out to the rocky island and lay where Gunlaug had lain.

One day as he was resting among the ling, he saw a boat steering directly towards him; it drew up by the side of his, and Gunlaug stepped out. She was exactly the same, only full grown and taller than other women. Just as she saw him, she drew to one side a little quite slowly; she had not thought about his being grown up too.

This pale thin face she did not know; it was no longer delicate and fine; it was inanimate. But, as he looked at her, his eye caught a brightness from the dreams of the past; she went forward again; with every step she took, a year seemed to fall from off him, and when she stood beside him, where he had sprung up, then he laughed as a child and spoke as a child; the old face seemed like a mask over the child; he was certainly older, but he was not grown.

Yet, though it was the child she was seeking, now, when she had found it, she knew not what further to do; she smiled and blushed. Involuntarily he felt, as it were, a power within him; it was the first time in his life, and in the same minute he grew handsome; it lasted, perhaps, scarcely a moment, but in that moment she was caught.

She was one of those natures that can only love that which is weak, that they have borne in their arms. She had intended to be in the town two days; she stayed two months. During these two months he developed more than in all the rest of his youth; he was lifted so far out of dreams and drowsiness as to form plans; he would leave, he would learn to play! But when one day he repeated this, she turned pale; "Yes,--" she said, "but we must be married first." He looked at her, she looked wistfully again, they both grew fiery red, and he said: "What would people say?"

Gunlaug had never thought over the possibility of his doing other than agree to what she wished because she acceded to every wish of his. But now she saw that in the depths of his soul he had never for a moment thought of sharing anything else with her than what she gave. In one minute she became conscious that thus it had been

the whole of their lives. She had begun in pity, and ended in love to that which she herself had tended. Had she been composed but for a single moment! Seeing her gathering wrath, he was afraid, and exclaimed: "I will!"----She heard it, but anger over her own folly and his paltriness, over her own shame and his cowardice, boiled up in such fervid heat towards the exploding point, that never had a love beginning in childhood and evening sun, cradled by the waves and moonlight, led by the flute and gentle song, ended more wretchedly. She seized him with both her hands, lifted him, and from the very depths of her heart gave him a good sound thrashing, then rowed straight back to town, and went direct over the mountains.

He had sailed out like a youth in love about to win his manhood, and he rowed back as an old man to whom that was a thing unknown. His life held but one remembrance, and that he had miserably lost, but one spot in the world had he to turn to, and thither he never dare come again. In pondering over his own wretchedness, how all this had really come about, his energy sank as in a morass never to rise again. The boys of the town, observing his singularity, soon began to tease him, and as he was an obscure person whom no one rightly knew, either what he lived on or what he did,--it never occurred to any one to defend him, and soon he durst no longer go out, at all events, not into the street. His whole existence became a strife with the boys, who were perhaps of the same use as gnats in the heat of summer, for without them he would have sunk down into perpetual drowsiness.

Nine years after, Gunlaug came to the town, quite as unexpectedly as she had left it. She had with her a girl of eight years, just like herself formerly, only finer, and as if veiled by a dream. Gunlaug had been married, it was said, and having had something left her, had now come to the town to establish a boarding house for seamen. This she conducted in such a way, that merchants and skippers came to her to hire their men, and sailors to get hired; besides, the whole town ordered fish there. She was called "Fish-Gunlaug," or "Gunlaug on the Bank"; the appellation "Fisher Girl" passed over to the daughter, who was everywhere at the head of the boys in the

town.

Her history it is that shall here be related; she had something of her mother's natural power, and she got opportunity to use it.

II.

"SOME OTHER BOYS."

The many lovely gardens of the town were fragrant after the rain in their second and third flowering. The sun had gone down behind the everlasting snow-capped mountains, the whole heavens there away were fire and light, and the snow gave a subdued reflection. The nearer mountains stood in shade, but were lightened by the forests in their many coloured tints of autumn. The rocky islands, that in the midst of the fiord followed one after another, just as though rowing to land, gave in their dense forests a yet more marked display of colours, because they lay nearer. The sea was perfectly calm, a large vessel was heaving landward. The people sat upon their wooden doorsteps, half covered with rose bushes on either side; they spoke to each other from porch to porch, or stepped across, or they exchanged greetings with those who were passing towards the long avenue. The tones of a piano might fall from an open window, otherwise there was scarcely a sound to be heard between the conversations; the feeling of stillness was increased by the last ray of sunlight over the sea.

All at once there rose up such a tumult from the midst of the town as though it were being stormed. Boys shouted, girls screamed, other boys hurrahed, old women scolded and ordered, the policeman's great dog howled, and all the curs of the town replied; they who were in-doors must go out, out; the noise became so frightful that even the magistrate himself turned on his door-step, and let fall these words: "There must be something up."

"Whatever is that?" assailed the ears of those who stood on the doorsteps from others who came from the avenue.--"Yes, what can it be!" they replied.--"Whatever can that be?" they now all of them asked anyone who was passing from the centre of the town. But as this town lies in a crescent shape in an easy curve round the bay, it was long before all at both ends had heard the reply: "It is only the Fisher Girl."

This adventurous soul, protected by a mother of whom all stood in awe, and certain of every sailor's defence, (for, for such they got always a free dram from the mother,) had, at the head of her army of boys, attacked a great apple tree in Pedro Ohlsen's orchard. The plan of attack was as follows: some of the boys should attract Pedro's attention to the front of the house by clashing the rose bushes against the window; one should shake the tree, and the others toss the apples in all directions over the hedge, not to steal them--far from it--but only to have some fun. This ingenious plan had been laid that same afternoon behind Pedro's garden; but as fortune would have it, Pedro was sitting just at the other side of the hedge, and heard every word. A little before the appointed time, therefore, he got the drunken policeman of the town and his great dog into the back room, where both were treated. When the Fisher Girl's curly pate was seen over the plank fencing, and at the same time a number of small fry tittered from every corner, Pedro suffered the scamps in front of the house to clash his rose bushes at their pleasure,--he waited quietly in the back room. And just as they were all standing round the tree in great stillness, and the Fisher Girl barefooted, torn, and scratched, was up to shake it, the side door suddenly flew open and Pedro and the Police rushed out with sticks, the great dog following. A cry of terror arose from the lads, while a number of little girls, who in all innocence were playing at "Last Bat," outside the plank fencing, thinking some one was being murdered within, began to shriek at the top of their voices; the boys who had escaped shouted hurrah! those who were yet hanging on the fence screamed under the play of the sticks, and to make the whole perfect, some old women rose up out of the depths, as always when lads are screaming, and

screamed with them. Pedro and the policeman, getting frightened themselves, tried to silence the women; but in the meantime the boys ran off, the dog, of whom they were most afraid, after them over the hedge,--for this was something for him--and now they flew like wild ducks, boys, girls, the dog and screams all over the town.

All this time the Fisher Girl sat quite still in the tree, thinking that no one had observed her. Crouched up in the topmost branch, through the leaves she followed the course of the fray. But when the policeman had gone out in a rage to the women, and Pedro Ohlsen was left alone in the garden, he went straight under the tree, looked up and cried: "Come down with you this minute, you rascal!"--Not a sound from the tree.--"Will you come down with you, I say! I know you are there!"--The most perfect stillness.--"I must go in for my gun, and shoot up, must I?" He made pretence to go.--"Hu-hu-hu-hu!" it answered in owlish tones, "I am so frightened!"--"Oh to be sure you are! You are the worst young scamp in the whole lot, but now I have you!"--"Oh dear! good kind sir, I won't do it any more," at the same time she flung a rotten apple right on to his nose, and a rich peal of laughter followed after. The apple caked all over, and while he was wiping it off, she scrambled down; she was already hanging on the plank fence before he could come after her, and she could have got over if she had not been so terrified that he was behind, that she let go instead. But when he caught her she began to shriek; the shrill and piercing yell she gave frightened him so that he let go his hold. At her signal of alarm, the people came flocking outside, and hearing them she gained courage. "Let me go, or I'll tell mother!" she threatened, her whole face flashing fire. Then he recognised the face, and cried: "Your mother? Who is your mother?"--"Gunlaug on the Bank, Fisher Gunlaug," replied the youngster triumphantly; she saw he was afraid. Being near sighted, Pedro had never seen the girl before now; he was the only one in the place who did not know who she was, and he was not even aware that Gunlaug was in the town. As though possessed, he cried: "What do they call you?"--"Petra," cried the other still louder.--"Petra!" howled Pedro, turned and ran

into the house as if he had been talking to the devil. But as the palest fear and the palest wrath resemble each other, she thought he was rushing in for his gun. She was terror-stricken, and already she felt the shot in her back, but as, just at this moment, they had broken the door open from outside, she made her escape; her dark hair flew behind her like a terror, her eyes shot fire, the dog which she just met, followed howling, and thus she fell on her mother, who was coming from the kitchen with a tureen of soup, the girl into the soup, the soup on the floor, and a "Go to the dogs!" after them both. But as she laid there in the soup, she cried: "He'll shoot me, mother, shoot me!"--"Who'll shoot you, you rascal?"--"He, Pedro Ohlsen?"--"Who?" roared the mother.--"Pedro Ohlsen, we took apples from him," she never dare say anything but the truth.--"Who are you talking about, child?"--"About Pedro Ohlsen, he is after me with a great gun, and he'll shoot me!"--"Pedro Ohlsen!" fumed the mother, and with an enraged laugh she drew herself up.--The child began to cry and tried to escape, but the mother sprang over her, her white teeth glistening, and catching her by the shoulder, she pulled her up.--"Did you tell him who you were?"--"Yes!" cried the child, but the mother heard not, saw not, she only asked again twice, three times:--"Did you tell him who you were?"--"Yes, yes, yes, yes!" and the child held up her hands entreatingly. Then the mother rose up to her full height:--"So he got to know!--What did he say?"--"He ran in after a gun to shoot me."--"He shoot you!" she laughed in the utmost scorn. The child, scared and bespattered with soup had crept into the chimney corner, she was drying herself and crying, when the mother came to her again:--"If you go to him," she said, and took and shook her, "or speak to him, or listen to him. Heaven have mercy upon both him and you! Tell him so from me! Tell him so from me!" she repeated threateningly, as the child did not answer directly, "Yes, yes, yes, yes!" "Tell him so from me!" she repeated yet once more, but slowly, and nodding at every word as she went.

The child washed herself, changed her dress, and sat out on the steps in her Sunday clothes. But at the thought of the terror she had been in, she began to sob

again.--"What are you crying for, child?" asked a voice more kindly than any she had heard before. She looked up; before her stood a fine looking man, with high forehead and spectacles. She stood up quickly, for it was Hans Odegaard, a young man whom the whole town revered. "What are you crying for, my child?" She looked at him and said that she had been going to take some apples from Pedro Ohlsen's garden, together with "several other boys;" but then Pedro and the policeman had come, and then--; she remembered that the mother had made her uncertain about the shooting, so she durst not tell it; but she gave a deep sigh instead.

"Is it possible," said he, "that a child of your age could think of committing so great a sin?" Petra looked at him; she had known well enough that it was sin, but she had always heard it denounced thus: "You child of the devil, you black haired wretch!" Now, she felt ashamed. "That you do not go to school and learn God's commandment to us of what is good and evil!" She stood stroking her frock and answered, that mother did not wish her to go to school.--"Perhaps you cannot even read?" Yes, she could read. He took up a little book and gave her. She looked in it, then turned it round to look at the outside: "I cannot read such small print," she said. But she was obliged to try, and she felt herself utterly stupid; her eyes and mouth hung, all her limbs collapsed: "G-o-d, God the L-o-r-d, God the Lord s-a-i-d, God the Lord said to M-M-M--"--"Dear me! Why you cannot even read this! And a child of ten or twelve years? Would you not like to learn to read?" By degrees she drawled out, that she would like it. "Then come with me, we must begin at once." She rose, but only to look in the house. "Yes, tell your mother," he said. The mother was just passing, and seeing the child talking to a stranger, she came out upon the doorstep. "He will teach me to read," said the child doubtfully, with eyes fixed on the mother, who did not answer, but stood with her arms on her side looking at Odegaard.--"Your child is an ignorant one," he said, "you cannot answer to God or man, to let her go as she does."--"Who are you?" asked Gunlaug sharply.--"Hans

Odegaard, your pastor's son." Her brow lightened a little, she had heard him highly spoken of. He began again: "During the time I have been at home, I have noticed this child, and to-day I have been again reminded of her. She must not any longer be brought up only to that which is useless."--What's that to you? the mother's face distinctly expressed. Then he asked her quietly: "But you mean her to learn something?"--"No."--He blushed slightly. "Why not?"--"People who have learning are perhaps the better for it?" She had had but one experience and this she held fast.--"I am astonished that any one can ask such a thing!"--"Ah, but, I know they are not;" she went down the steps to put an end to this nonsense. But he stepped in front of her: "Here is a duty which you SHALL NOT pass by. You are a thoughtless mother."--Gunlaug measured him from top to toe: "Who told you what I am?" she said as she passed by him.--"You have just now done it yourself, for otherwise you must have seen that the child is on the way to be ruined."--Gunlaug turned, and her eye met his; she saw he meant what he had said and she grew afraid. She had only had to do with seamen and tradespeople; such language she had never heard before. "What will you do with my child?" she asked.--"Teach her the things belonging to her soul's salvation, and then see what she must be."--"My child shall not be other than that I will she shall be."--"Yes she shall; she shall be what God wills."--Gunlaug was silenced: "What is that to say?" she said and came nearer.--"It is, that she must learn what she is capable of by her natural abilities, for therefore has God given them."--Gunlaug now drew quite near. "Then must not I direct her, I, who am her mother?" she asked, as if she really wished to learn.--"That you must, but you must respect the advice of those who know better; you must listen to the will of God."--Gunlaug stood still a moment. "But if she learnt too much," she said; "a poor man's child!" she added and looked tenderly at her daughter.--"If she learns too much for her station, she has thereby reached a higher one."--She quickly saw his meaning, and said as if to herself, while she looked more and more anxiously at the child: "But this is dangerous."--"The question is not about that, he said mildly, but

about what is right."--Her deep eyes took a strange expression; she looked again piercingly at him; but there lay so much of truth in his voice, words, countenance, that Gunlaug felt herself defeated. She went across to the child, laid her hand on her head, and could not speak.

"I shall read with her until she is confirmed," he said as if to help her; "I wish to take this child in hand."--"And you will take her away from me?"--He hesitated and looked at her inquiringly.--"You must understand it better than I," she struggled to say; "but if it was not that you named our Lord,"--she stopped; she had smoothed her daughter's hair, and now she took a handkerchief and tied round her neck. She did not say in any other way that the child should go with him, and she hastened back into the house as if she wished not to see it.

This behaviour made him feel suddenly anxious at that which in his youthful ardour he had taken upon himself. The child, too, was afraid of the one who for the first time had overcome her mother, and so with this natural fear they went to their first lesson.

From day to day, however, it seemed to him that she grew in wisdom and knowledge, and at times his conversation with her, assumed of themselves quite a peculiar tone. He often drew her attention to characters in sacred and profane history in pointing out the CALLING that God had given them. He would dwell upon Saul who was leading a wild roving life, and upon a lad like David who was tending his father's sheep, until Samuel came and laid the hand of the Lord upon them. But the greatest calling of all, was when the Lord himself was upon earth, when he stopped at the fishing village, and called, and the poor fishermen arose and went--to poverty, as to death, but always joyfully; for the feeling of a call carries through all adversities.

These thoughts followed her so, that at last she could bear these things no longer, and asked him about her own calling. He looked at her till she blushed, then

answered her that we must reach our calling through work; it may be modest and simple, but it is there for all. Then she was seized with an eager zeal; it made her work with the power of a grown person, it upset her play, she grew quite thin. She got romantic longings; she would cut her hair, clothe herself like a boy, and go out to battle. But as her teacher said one day that her hair was beautiful if only it was nicely kept, she began to think much of it, and for the sake of her long hair she sacrificed the name of a hero.

Afterwards it was more to her than before to be a girl, and her studies went quietly on, canopied by changing dreams.

III.

READY FOR CONFIRMATION.

Hans Odegaard had gone out as a young man from the hamlet of Odegaard in Bergen's shire; people had taken to him, and he was now a learned man and a strict preacher. He was besides an influential man, not so much in words as in deeds; for, as it was said, he "never forgot." This man who by perseverance pushed everything through, was however stopped in a way that he least expected, and where it was most painful.

He had three daughters and one son. Hans, the son, was the light of the school, and it was his father's daily pleasure to prepare him himself. Hans had a friend whom he helped to get the second place, and who therefore, save his mother, loved him more than all the world. They went together to school and to the university; they passed the two first examinations together, and were then to study for the same profession. One day as they were going joyfully down stairs after their studies, Hans, in an outburst of high spirits and glee, threw himself upon his companion's back, thereby causing him a fall, which some days later ended in his death. When dying he begged

his mother, who was a widow, and now lost her only son, to fulfil his last request and take Hans up in his place. Almost immediately after the mother died, but her very considerable fortune was left to Hans Odegaard.

It was years before Hans could recover himself after this. A long tour on the continent so far restored him, that he could resume his theological studies; but on his return home, he could not be persuaded to make use of his examinations.

The father's greatest hope had been to see him as his assistant in the ministry, but he could not now be persuaded to enter the pulpit a single time; he gave always the same reply: "he felt no calling:" this was so bitter a disappointment to the father, that it made him several years older. He had commenced late in life, and was already an old man; he had worked hard, and always with this end in view. Now the son occupied the largest part of the house, handsomely furnished, while down below in his little study, by the lamp that lightened the night of age, sat the hard-working old father.

After this disappointment, he neither could nor would take other help, neither would he give in to his son, and relinquish altogether; therefore, summer or winter, he knew no rest; but each year the son took a longer tour abroad. When he was at home he associated with no one, except that in silence, greater or less, he dined at his father's table. If any began to converse with him, they were met by a superior clearness and earnestness for the truth, that made them always feel the conversation a little embarrassing. He never went to church, but he gave more than half his income to benevolent objects, and always with the most express injunctions as to its appropriation.

This beneficence was so different in its scale from the narrow customs of the little town that it won the hearts of all. Add to this, his reserve, his frequent journey abroad, the hesitation all felt in conversing with him, and one can easily understand that he was regarded as a mysterious being to which each added all possible

qualities, and his own best judgment. Therefore when he condescended to take the Fisher Girl under his daily care, she was ennobled by it.

Every one, especially women, seemed anxious to show her some favour. One day she came to him clad in all the colours of the rainbow; she had put on her presents, thinking she would now be really to his taste, as he always wished her to be neat. But he had scarcely glanced at her, before he forbade her ever to receive presents; he called her vain, foolish: her aims were shallow, she took pleasure in folly.

When she came next morning, with eyes that told a tale of weeping, he took her with him a walk above the town. He told her about David in such a manner that he took now this, now that incident, and made the well-known story anew. First, he depicted him in his youth, beautiful and rich in talent, and in child-like faith; how, while yet a boy, he came with the triumphal procession. From a shepherd he was called to be king, he dwelt in caves, but ended in building Jerusalem. When Saul was ill, he came beautifully attired, and played and sang before him, but when as king he himself was ill, he played and sang clad in the garb of repentance. When he had achieved his great works, he took rest in sin, then came the prophet and punishment, and he became a child again. David, who could call the people of God to songs of praise, lay contrite at the feet of the Lord. Was he most beautiful, when crowned with victory he danced before the ark to his own songs, or when in his private closet he begged for mercy from the punishing hand?

The night after this conversation Petra had a dream, which all her life she never forgot. She sat upon a white horse and came in triumphal procession, but, at the same time, in front of the horse, she saw herself dancing in rags.

One evening some time after this, as she was sitting at the edge of the forest above the town learning her lessons, Pedro Ohlsen, who since that day in the garden had approached gradually nearer, passed close by, and, with a singular smile, whispered: "Good evening!" Though more than a year had passed by, her mother's injunction

not to speak to him was so strongly before her that she did not answer. But day after day he went by in the same way, and always with the same greeting; at last she missed him, when he did not come. Soon he asked a little question in passing, by-and-bye it increased to two, and at last it was quite a conversation. After such one day, he let a silver dollar slip down into her lap, and then hastened away in delight. Now, if it was against the mother's commands to talk to Pedro Ohlsen, it was against Odegaard's to take gifts from any one. The first prohibition she had little by little overstepped, but it came to her mind now, when it had led to her also overstepping the second. To get rid of the money she got hold of some one to treat; but, in spite of their best endeavours, they could not eat more than the worth of four marks; and afterwards it troubled her that she had misspent the dollar instead of giving it back. The mark that still lay in her pocket felt so hot that it might have burned a hole in her clothes; she took it and threw it into the sea. But she was not rid of the dollar thereby; her thoughts were burnt by it. She felt that, if she confessed, it might pass over, but her mother's fearful rage before, and Odegaard's good faith in her, were each, in its own way, alike alarming. Whilst the mother said nothing, Odegaard quickly observed that there was something which made her unhappy.

One day he asked her tenderly what it was, and, as instead of answering, she burst into tears, he thought they must be in want at home and gave her ten specie dollars. It made a strong impression on her that, although she had sinned against him, he yet gave her money, and as into the bargain she could now give this openly to her mother, she felt herself freed from her guilt, and gave herself up to the greatest joy. She took his hand in both of hers, she thanked him, she laughed, she jumped about, and smiled in ecstacy through her tears, as she looked at him something in the way that a dog regards his master when going out. He did not know her again; she who always sat wrapt in what he was saying, now took all power from him; for the first time he felt a strong, wild nature heaving within him, for the first time the well of life sent her red streams over him, and he drew back all crimson. Meanwhile Petra

went out to run home over the hills behind the town. Once there, she laid the money on the baking-stone before her mother, throwing her arms round her neck. "Who has been giving you money?" said the mother, vexed already.--"Odegaard, mother, he is the greatest man upon earth."--"What am I to do with it?"--"I don't know--heavens! mother, if you knew"--and she again threw her arms round her neck; she could and she would now tell her all, but the mother released herself impatiently: "Will you have me to take alms? Take the money back at once. If you have made him believe I am in want, you have lied!"--"But, mother?"--"Take the money to him, I say, or I shall go myself and throw them at him, HIM who has taken my child from me!" The mother's lips trembled after the last words. Petra turned back very pale. She opened the door softly and glided out of the house. Before she knew what she was about the ten specie notes were torn to pieces in her fingers. When she found what she had done, she burst out in an invective against the mother. But Odegaard must know nothing about it, yes, he should know all! for to him she must not lie. A moment after and she stood in his house, and told him that her mother would not take the money, and that in her vexation at having to bring it back, she had torn the notes in two. She would have told him more, but he received her coldly, and told her to go home with the admonition to shew her mother obedience, even where it felt hard to do so. This, however, seemed strange to her, as she knew so much, that he did not do what the father most desired! On her way home she was quite overcome, and just then she met Pedro Ohlsen. She had shunned him all this time, and would have done the same now, for from him came all this unhappiness, but he followed her, and asked her, "Where have you been, has anything happened to you?" The waves of her mind rose so high that they cast her whithersoever they would, and, as she thought it over, she could not understand why the mother should forbid her to have anything to do with him; it could be only a fancy, the one as well as the other. "Do you know what I have done?" he said, almost humbly, when she had stopped "I have bought a sailing boat for you. I thought you might like to have a sail," and he laughed. His

kindness, which resembled a poor man's entreaty, could touch her now; she nodded; he was in a great hurry and whispered eagerly that she must go through the town, and down the avenue to the right, till she came to the great yellow boat-house, behind which he would come and fetch her; no one could see them there. She went, and he came and took her in. They sailed along for some time in the light breeze, then made for a rocky island, where they moored the boat and got out. He had brought some nice things for her to eat, and he took out his flute and played. In seeing his pleasure she forgot her sorrows for a time, and the joy of weak people having a tendering influence, she became attached to him.

After this day she had a new and continual secret from her mother, and soon this had the effect of keeping everything from her. Gunlaug made no inquiries, she believed everything till she doubted all.

But now Petra had also a secret from Odegaard, for she accepted many gifts from Pedro Ohlsen; he likewise made no inquiries, but the lessons were day by day conducted in a more distant manner. Petra was now divided amongst three; she never spoke to any one of them about the others, and she had something to hide from each in particular.

Under all this she had grown up without being aware of it herself, and one day Odegaard communicated to her that she must now be confirmed.

This intimation filled her with uneasiness, for she knew that with the confirmation her lessons were to cease, and what would then become of her? The mother was having an attic chamber made for her, that after the confirmation she might have a room of her own, and the constant knocking and hammering was a painful reminder. Odegaard observed that she grew more and more quiet, sometimes he saw also that she had been weeping. Under these circumstances the religious instruction made a great impression on her, although Odegaard with great care avoided all that might excite or move her. For this reason a fortnight before the confirmation, he gave up

the lessons with the short intimation that this was the last time. By this he meant the last with him; for he would certainly watch over her still, though through others. She, however, remained seated where she was, the blood left her veins, her eyes remained fixed, and involuntarily moved, he hastened to give a reason: "It is not all young girls that are grown up at their confirmation; but you must be aware that it is so with you." If she had stood in the glare of a great fire, she could not have been more fiery red than she became at these words; her bosom heaved, her eyes took a vague expression and filled with tears, and driven further he hastened to say: "We may perhaps still go on?" He did not until after realise what he had proposed; he was wrong, he must retract it; but her eyes were already lifted towards him. She did not answer "yes" with her lips, but more plainly it could not be said. To excuse himself in his own eyes, by finding a pretext, he asked: "There will be something you would especially like to do now, something you--" he bent down towards her--"feel a calling to, Petra?"--"No," she replied so quickly that he coloured, and as if chilled, fell back into the considerations which for years had occupied his mind; her unexpected reply had recalled them.

That she was possessed of some peculiar qualities, he had never doubted from the time she was a child, and he saw her march singing at the head of the street boys; but the longer he taught her, the less he felt to understand her talent. It was present in every movement; what she thought, what she wished, mind and body simultaneously made known in the fulness of power, and the light of beauty, but put in words, and especially in writing, it is only child-like simplicity. She appeared all imagination, but he perceived in it especially a feeling of unrest. She was very earnest, but she read more to go on than to learn; what could be on the other side occupied her most. She had religious feeling, but as the pastor expressed it, "no turn for a religious life," and Odegaard was often anxious about her. Now that he was at the closing point, his thoughts involuntarily reverted to the stone step where he had received her; he heard the mother's sharp voice leaving the responsibility with him,

because he had used the name of Our Lord. After pacing a few times up and down he collected himself: "I am going abroad, now," he said with a certain shyness, "I have asked my sister to care for you in my absence, and when I return we will try again. Farewell! We shall meet again before I go!" he went so quickly into the next room, that she could not even shake hands with him.

She saw him again where she had least expected it, in the pastor's pew beside the choir, just in front of her as she stepped forth with the others to be confirmed. This so affected her, that her thoughts flew far away from the holy act, for which, in humility and prayer, she had prepared herself. Yes, if that was Odegaard's old father, he stopped and looked long at his son, as he stepped forth to begin. Soon Petra was once more to be startled in church, for a little below sat Pedro Ohlsen in prim new clothes; he was just stretching his neck to catch a glimpse of her over the heads of the boys; he soon bobbed down, but she saw him repeatedly stick up his thin-haired head to bob again. This distracted her, she did not wish to look, but she did look, and there,--just as the others were all deeply moved, many in tears,--she was terrified to see him rise up with stiff open mouth and transfixed eyes, without power to sit down or move, for opposite him, stretched to her full height, stood Gunlaug; Petra shuddered to see her, she was white as the altar cloth. Her black crimpy hair seemed to rise up, while her eyes got suddenly a repulsive power, as though they said: "Away from her, what have you to do with her?" Under this look he sank down upon the form, and a minute after stole out of church.

After this Petra felt composed, and the further the rite proceeded the more fully she entered into it. And when, after having given her promise, she turned round and looked through her tears at Odegaard, as the one who stood nearest to her good intentions, she resolved in her heart that she would not put his hopes to shame. The steadfast eye that looked expressively in return seemed to entreat her for the same, but when she had taken her place and would find him again, he was gone. She soon went home with her mother, who on the way let fall these words: "I have done my

part;--now may Our Lord do His!"

When they had dined together, they two alone, the mother said as she rose: "Now we may as well go to him,--the pastor's son. Though I don't know what it will lead to that he does, he surely means it well. Put on your things again, child!"

The road to church which they two had so often trodden, lay above the town, but through the street they had never before walked together; indeed the mother had scarcely been there since she had come back to the place, but she would now go the whole length with her grown up daughter!

On the afternoon of a confirmation Sunday, such a little town is all on the move, either going from house to house to congratulate, or in the street to see and to be seen; there is a salutation and halting at every step, a shaking of hands, and interchanging of good wishes: the poor children appear in the cast-off clothes of the rich, and are paraded forth to return their thanks. The sailors in their foreign pageantry, with the hat upon three hairs; and the fops, the merchants, clerks, walked in groups, bowing to all as they passed. The half-grown up lads of the Latin school, each arm in arm with his best friend in the world, sauntered after in rash criticism; but to-day every one in his own mind must yield the palm to the lion of the place, the young merchant, the wealthiest man in the town, Yngve Vold, just returned from Spain, all in trim to take charge on the morrow of his mother's extensive fish trade. With a light hat over his light hair, he strolled through the streets; every one bade him welcome, he spoke to all, smiled to all; so the young people who had just been confirmed were almost forgotten;--backwards and forwards one might see the light hat over the light hair, and hear the light laughter. When Petra and her mother entered the street, he was the first they stumbled upon, and as if they had in reality stumbled against him, he started back before Petra, whom he did not recognise.

She had grown tall, not as tall as the mother but above the average height, easy, elegant, and fearless, the mother and not the mother inconstant interchange. The

young merchant, who walked along behind them, could no longer attract the attention of the passers-by; the two, mother and daughter, were a more striking sight. They walked quickly, without noticing any one, for they were seldom greeted except by seamen; they soon returned more quickly still, for they had heard that Odegaard had just left home for the steamer and would soon be gone. Petra was in great haste; she must, she must indeed see him and thank him before he went; it was wrong of him to leave her thus! She saw none of all those who were looking at her; it was the smoke from the steamer she saw over the roofs of the houses, and it seemed to be getting further away. When they came to the quay, the boat had just left, and, with sobs in her throat, she hastened further up the walk; indeed she more sprang than walked, and the mother strode after. As the steamer had taken some minutes to turn in the harbour, she was just in time to spring down on the wharf, get up on a stone, and wave her pocket handkerchief. The mother remained on the walk, and would not go down; Petra waved--waved higher and higher, but there was no one who waved again.

Then she could bear it no longer; she could not restrain her tears, and was obliged to return home by the higher path; the mother followed, but in silence. The attic which her mother had prepared for her, and where she had slept for the first time the night before, and had that morning put on her new dress with so much delight, now received her bathed in tears, and without so much as a glance around; she would not go down where the seamen and others were sitting;--she took off her confirmation dress and sat on the bed till night came; to be grown up seemed to her the most unhappy thing that could be.

IV.

ONE AND ANOTHER.

One day after the Confirmation Petra went over to Odegaard's sisters, but she soon

saw that this must have been a mistake on his part, for the pastor went by as though he never saw her, and the daughters, both older than Odegaard, received her stiffly. They satisfied themselves with giving a bare account from their brother of what she was now to do. The whole of the forenoon she was to be engaged in household duties at a house in the suburbs of the town, and in the afternoon to go to the sewing school; she was to sleep at home, and take breakfast and supper there.

She acted according to this arrangement, and found it agreeable enough as long as it was new, but afterwards, and especially when summer came, she began to get tired of it, for she had been accustomed in summer to sit up in the forest the whole day long, and had read in her books, which from the depths of her heart she now missed, as she missed Odegaard, as she missed conversation. The consequence was that at last she took it where it was to be found. About this time a young girl entered the sewing school, called Lise Let, i.e. Lise, but not Let; for that was the name of a young cadet, who had been at home one Christmas, and betrothed himself to her on the ice, while she was only a child at school. Lise vowed it was not true, and cried if any one named it; nevertheless, she went by the name of Lise Let. The little, active Lise Let often laughed and often cried; but, whether she laughed or cried, she thought about love. A perfect swarm of new and curious thoughts soon filled the school; if a hand was reached out for the scissors, it was to go a courting, and the scissors said, yes, or gave a refusal. The needle was bethrothed to the thread, and the thread sacrificed herself stitch by stitch to the heartless tyrant; she who pricked her finger, shed her heart's blood, and to change needles was to be unfaithful. If two of the girls whispered together, it was about something remarkable that had happened to them; soon two more began to whisper, and then two again; each one had her confidant, and there were a thousand secrets: it was impossible to stand it.

One afternoon at dusk, in a fine drizzling rain, Petra, with a large handkerchief over her head, stood outside her mother's house, and peeped into the passage, where a young sailor was standing, whistling a waltz. She held the handkerchief together

with both her hands tight under her chin, so that only her eyes and nose could be seen, but the sailor saw she was winking at him, and he went quickly out where she stood. "I say, Gunnar, will you go a walk?"--"But it rains!"--"Tut, is that anything!" and so they went to a small house higher up the mountain. "Buy me a few cakes,--those with the icing!"--"You are always wanting cakes."--"With the icing!" He came out again with them; she stuck one hand out from under the handkerchief, took them in, and went on again, eating as she went. When they had got just above the town, she said as she gave him the cake: "I say now, Gunnar! we have always thought so much of each other, we two; I have always liked you better than any other boys! You don't believe it? But I assure you, Gunnar! And now you are second mate and can soon take a ship; it seems to me you should get engaged Gunnar! Dear, why don't you eat the cake?"--"I have begun to chew tobacco."--"Well, what do you say?"--"Oh! there's no hurry for that!"--"No hurry? And you go away day after to-morrow?"--"Yes, but am I not coming back again?"--"But it isn't certain that I shall have time then, and you don't know where I shall be either,"--"It should be to you, then?"--"Yes, Gunnar, you might have understood that, but you were always slow, that was why you were only a sailor, too."--"Oh! I'm not sorry for that, it's quite nice to be a sailor."--"Yes, to be sure,--your mother has ships. But what do you say now? You are so dull!"--"Yes, what shall I say?"--"What shall you say? Ha-ha-ha, perhaps you won't have me!"--"Ah! Petra, you know quite well I will; but I don't think I can trust you."--"Yes, Gunnar, I shall be as true, as true!"--He stood a minute still; "Let me see your face, Petra!"--"What for that?"--"I want to see if you really mean it."--"Do you think I go and trifle with you, Gunnar?" She was vexed and lifted the handkerchief.--"Well, Petra, if it is to be right regular earnest, then give me a kiss upon it, for one knows what that means."--"Have you lost your wits?" She drew the handkerchief over, and went on.--"Stay Petra, stay! You don't understand.--If we are engaged--" "Oh! nonsense with you!"--"Yes, but I know what is customary, and as far as experience goes, I beat you hollow. Remember all that I

have seen."--"Yes, you've seen all like a simpleton, and you talk as you've seen."--"What do you mean by being engaged, then, Petra? I may surely ask about that! There's no meaning in running up and down hill after each other!"--"No, that's true enough." She laughed, and stopped. "But listen now, Gunnar! While we stand here and puff--huf!--I'll tell you how lovers do. Every evening as long as you are here, you must wait outside the sewing school and go home with me to the door, and if I am out anywhere else, you must wait in the street till I come. And when you go away, you must write to me, and buy things to send me. To be sure: we must exchange rings, with your name in one and mine in the other, and then the year and the day; but I have no money, so you must buy them both."--"Yes, I'll do that; but--" "Now, what about 'but' again?"--"Good heavens! I only meant I must have the measure of your finger."--"Yes, that you shall have directly;" and she picked up a straw and bit off the measure: "Now don't lose it!" He wrapped it in paper, and put it in his pocket book; she watched him till the pocket book was hidden again. "Let us go now, I'm tired of standing here."--"But, I must say I think it rather flat, Petra!"--"Very well, if you won't, it's all the same to me!"--"Certainly I will, it's not that; but shan't I even so much as get hold of your hand!"--"What for that?"--"As a sign that we're really engaged."--"Such nonsense, does that make it more certain? You can have my hand, anyhow; here it is! No thank you, no squeezing, sir!"--She drew her head within the handkerchief again, then suddenly she lifted the handkerchief with both hands, and her face came full into view. "If you tell any one, Gunnar, I shall say it is not true, so you know!" She laughed, and went on down the hill. A little after, she stopped, and said: "The sewing school will be over to-morrow at nine, so you can go and stand at the foot of the garden."--"Very well."--"Yes, but now you must go!"--"Won't you, then, even give me your hand at parting?"--"I don't know what you are always wanting with my hand,--no, you won't get it now. Good bye!" she cried, and away she sprang.

Next evening she arranged it so, that she was the last at the sewing school. It was

nearly ten when she left, but when she had passed through the garden, Gunnar was not there. She had imagined all sorts of misfortunes, but not this; she was so much offended, that she waited, merely to give it him in earnest, when at last he did come. Besides she had good company as she walked up and down; for the merchants' singing club had just begun to practise with open windows, in a house near by, and a Spanish song, that mild evening, lured her thoughts till she was in Spain, and heard her praises sung from the open balcony. Spain was her great longing, for every summer came the dark Spanish ships into the harbour, the Spanish songs into the streets, and upon Odegaard's walls, hung a row of pictures from Spain; perhaps he was there again now, and she was with him! But in the same minute she was called home again, for there, behind the apple tree, was Gunnar coming at last; she rushed towards--not Gunnar, but the one returned from Spain, the light hat over the light hair. "Ha, ha, ha, ha," laughed the light laughter, "so you take me for another?" She denied it eagerly, hastily, and began to run in her vexation, but he ran after, talking incessantly whilst he ran very quickly, and with that mixed accent that people get when they use several languages. "Yes, I can easily keep you company, for I'm a capital runner,--it won't help you,--I must speak to you,--it is too quiet here, people are dead, but you are not dead, I can see. I must speak to you; I am here for the eighth evening."--"For the eighth evening!"--"The eighth evening; ha, ha, ha, I would gladly go for eight more, for we two suit each other, don't we? It's no use, I shan't let you slip, for now you are tired, I can see."--"No, I'm not."--"Yes, you are."--"No, I'm not."--"Yes, you are! Talk, then, if you are not tired!"--"Ha, ha, ha!"--"Ha, ha, ha, ha! Yes, that's not to talk," and so they stopped. They exchanged a few witty words, half in jest, and half in earnest; then he began to speak in praise of Spain, and one picture followed another, till he ended in cursing the little town at their feet. The first, Petra followed with beaming eyes; the second tingled in her ears, while her eyes moved up and down over a gold chain that hung twice round his neck. "Yes, this," he said hastily, and drew out the end of the chain, to which a gold

cross was fastened, "see, I took it with me to-night, to show at the singing club; it is from Spain. You shall hear its history." Then he related: "When I was in the south of Spain, I was present at a shooting match, and won this prize; it was handed to me at the festival with these words: 'Take this with you to Norway and give it to the most beautiful woman in your country, with the respectful homage of Spanish Cavaliers.' Then followed shouts, and processions, the waving of banners and the clapping of cavaliers, and I received the gift."--"No, how splendid! Tell more, more!" broke in Petra, for her imagination already pictured the Spanish feast, with the Spanish colours and songs, and the dusky Spaniards, standing under the vines in the evening sunlight, sending their thoughts to the most beautiful woman in the land of snow. He did as she requested; he increased her longing with new recitals, and, as if transported to that wonderful land, she began humming the Spanish song she had just heard, and, little by little, to move her feet to its time. "What! You can dance the Spanish dance?" he cried.--"Yes, yes--yes!" she sang in dancing time, snapping her fingers to imitate the castanets, and making some rapid steps upon the spot where she stood, for she had seen the Spanish sailors dance!--"You shall have the gift of the Spanish Cavaliers," cried he, in ecstacy, "you are the most beautiful woman I have met." He had taken the gold chain from his own neck, and had lightly thrown it once or twice round hers before she came to understand it. But, when she understood it, she was suffused with the deep scarlet, peculiarly her own, and the tears were about to burst forth, so that he, falling from one surprise into another, did not know what more to do, but felt that he ought to go, and went.

At twelve o'clock with the chain in her hand, she still stood at the open window of her little room. The summer night lay gently over town and fiord and distant mountains; from the street the Spanish song sounded again, for the club had gone home with young Yngve Vold. Word for word it could be heard, about a beautiful wreath. Two voices only sang the words, the rest hummed the guitar accompaniment.

Take up the wreath, dearest, it is for thee, Take up the wreath, dearest, thinking of me;

Here is the rarest Of grass for the fairest, Here is the whitest Of flowers for the brightest. Here is a swelling Bud for the lovely one, Here is a telling Leaf for the faithful one.

Take up the wreath, dearest, it is for thee, Take up the wreath, dearest, thinking of me!

When she awoke in the morning she had been in a forest where the sun shone in on every side, where all the trees were those they called "golden rain," their long yellow tassels hanging down and almost touching her as she passed. Soon she remembered the chain, she took it and hung it over; then she put a black handkerchief over the white, and the chain over that, as it showed better upon black. She sat up in bed and kept looking at herself in a little hand mirror; was she indeed so beautiful? She stood up to do her hair and then look at herself again, but remembering that her mother knew nothing about it, she hastened to go down and tell her. Just as she was ready, and was about to hang the chain round her neck, it occurred to her what her mother would say, what everybody would say, and what she should answer when they asked her why she wore such a costly chain. The question being a very reasonable one, it returned again and again, till at last she drew forth a little box in which she laid the chain, put the box in her pocket, and, for the first time in her life, felt herself poor.

She did not go where she ought to have done that forenoon; for above the town, near the spot where she had got the chain, she sat with it in her hand, with a feeling as if she had stolen it.

That night, at the foot of the garden, she waited still longer for Yngve Vold than she had done the foregoing evening for Gunnar: she wanted to give him the chain back. But as the ship that Gunnar was going with, had the day before unexpectedly weighed anchor, because it had got a splendid cargo in the next town, so Yngve

Vold, the owner of the vessel had to set out to-day on the same errand; he had other business to transact at the same time, therefore he was away three weeks.

In these three weeks, the chain was gradually transferred from her pocket to a drawer in the closet, and from there again to an envelope, and the envelope to a secret corner; and during the time she herself made one humiliating discovery after another. For the first time she became aware of the distance that separated her from the ladies of the higher classes; they could have worn the chain without any one asking the why and the wherefore. But to one of these, Yngve Vold would not have ventured to offer the chain without, at the same time, offering his hand; it was only with the Fisher Girl he could do that. But if he wished to give her anything, why then not something she could have some use for; he had meant to scorn her so much the more, by giving her what she could never use. The story of "the most beautiful" must have been a fable; for had the chain been given her on that afternoon, he would never have come in secret, and at night time. Vexation and shame gnawed themselves so much the deeper in, as she had ceased to confide in any one. No wonder, then, that the first time she met him again, him in whom centred all these vexatious and shame-filling thoughts, she should blush so deeply that he misinterpreted it, and when she saw that, blush deeper still.

She turned her steps quickly home again, snatched up the chain, and, although it was scarcely light, she seated herself above the town to wait for him; now he should get it back! She felt sure he would come, because he also had blushed at seeing her, and he had been away the whole time. But soon these same thoughts began to tell in his favour; he would not have blushed if he had been indifferent to her; he would have come before if he had been at home. It began to get rather dusk; for in these three weeks the days had shortened quickly. But at nightfall our thoughts often change. She sat close above the road among the trees; she could see without being seen. When she had been there some time, and he did not come, conflicting thoughts began to rise; she listened now in anger, now in fear; she could hear every one who

came, long before she saw them, but it was never him. The little birds that half asleep changed their perches among the leaves, could frighten her, she sat so breathlessly; every sound from the town, every noise took her attention. A large vessel was weighing anchor, and the sailors were singing; it would be tugged out in the night, to get the good of the first morning breeze. She longed to go too, out upon the great sea. She caught up the song, the clinging stroke of the capstan gave raising power, whereto, whence? There stood the light hat upon the road just in front of her, she sprang up with a shriek, and frightened at what she had done, she ran, and in running she remembered she ought not to have done so; it was one mistake upon another, so she ran with all her might. But shame and agitation overpowered her, he was just behind, and she cast herself down among the trees. When he got up to her, she breathed so heavily that he could hear every breath, and the same power that in her intrepidity she had exercised over him last time they met, she still possessed as she lay there in an agony of fear; he bent over her, and whispered "Do not fear!"

But she trembled still more. Then he kneeled down beside her and took her hand, but slowly, for he himself was afraid. At the first touch of his hand she sprang up as if burnt with fire--and off again--whilst he remained standing.

She did not run far, for she had not power, her temples throbbed, her bosom heaved, she pressed her hands against it, and listened. She heard a step in the grass, a cracking among the leaves,--he was coming, and straight towards her. He saw her? No, he did not see,--Yes, good heavens, he saw!... no, he went by--Then she sank down weak and exhausted.

After a long time she got up and began to go slowly down the mountain, then stopped and went on again, as though without any aim. On reaching the road, there he was waiting for her; she had been walking as if in a fog and had not observed him before. He rose; a slight cry escaped her, but she did not stir, she merely put her hands before her eyes and wept. Then he whispered again: "I see you love me!--I

love you!--You shall be mine!--You don't answer?--You cannot!--But trust me, for from this hour you are mine!--Good night!" and he gently touched her shoulder.

She started, as before a sudden flash of lightning,--a shade of anxiety passed over, but it lightened again; this was indeed a marvel.

As fully as Yngve Vold had occupied her thoughts during the last three weeks, she was now turned round. He was the wealthiest man in the place, and of the oldest family; he would raise her up to him regardless of all considerations. This was something so different from her thoughts during all this time of vexation and suffering, that it might well begin to make her happy! And she grew happier and happier as she realized her new position. She felt herself every one's equal, and all her longings were about to be fulfilled. She saw Yngve Vold's finest vessel bedecked as the flag-ship on her wedding day, and, amid the salute of the minute gun, and fireworks, take them on board to bear them to Spain, where the wedding sun was glowing.

When Petra awoke next day, the girl came up to tell her it was half-past eleven o'clock; she felt ravenously hungry, eat her breakfast and wanted more,--complained of headache and weariness, and soon fell asleep again; on awaking about three in the afternoon, she felt quite well. The mother came up and said she had undoubtedly slept away an illness, for she used to do so herself; but now she must get up and go to the sewing school. Petra was sitting upright in bed, and leaned her head upon her arm; without getting up she answered that she was not going to the sewing school any more. The mother thought she must be still a little dazed, and went down to get a parcel and a letter that a sailor boy had brought. There were the gifts already! As soon as she was alone, Petra, who had laid down again, got up in haste and opened the parcel with a certain solemnity; it contained a pair of French shoes; a little disappointed she was putting them aside, when she felt them heavy in the toes; she put her hand into one of them and drew forth a small parcel folded in fine paper; it

was a gold bracelet; in the other was also a parcel, carefully wrapped up; a pair of French gloves,--and in the right hand she found a scrap of paper containing two plain gold rings. "Already!" thought Petra, her heart beat as she looked for the inscription, and read in the one, sure enough: "Petra," with the date, and in the other: "Gunnar." She turned pale, threw the rings and all the rest on the floor as though she had burnt herself, and hastily opened the letter. It was dated "Calais;"--she read:

"Dear Petra,

We had a fair wind from the sixty-first to the fifty-fourth degree of latitude, and afterwards got here under a strong side wind, which is unusual even for better vessels than ours, which is a fine craft under full sail. But now you must know that all the way I have been thinking about you, and about that which last occurred between us two, and am grieved that I could not see you to bid you good-bye. I went on board very vexed about it, but have never forgotten you since, except now and then in between, for a sailor has hard times of it. Now we have got here, and I have used all my wages to buy you presents as you asked me, and the money I got of mother, too, so I have none left. But, if I get leave, I shall come as soon as the gifts, for as long as it is secret, there is no certainty about others, especially young men, of whom there are many; but I will have it certain, so that no one can excuse himself, but beware of me. You can easily get a better one than me, for you can get any one you choose, but you can never get a truer, and that is me. Now I will conclude, for I have used up two sheets, and the letters are getting so large; it is the worst thing I have to do, but I do it, nevertheless, as you wish it. And so in conclusion I will say, that I hope it was earnest; for it was not earnest, it was a great sin, and will bring misfortune upon many.

Gunnar Ask,

Second Mate, 'Norwegian Constitution.'"

Overwhelmed with fear, she jumped out of bed and dressed herself. She felt as if she

must go out, where there was counsel to be had somewhere; for all had become obscure, uncertain, dangerous. The more she thought about it, the more tangled the thread became; some one must help to unravel it, or she never could get loose! But in whom dare she confide? There could be no one but the mother. When after a hard struggle she stood beside her in the kitchen, afraid and almost weeping, but determined to give complete confidence, that the assistance might be complete, the mother said without looking round, and therefore without observing Petra's face: "He has just been here; he has got home again."--"Who?" whispered Petra, holding fast for support; for if Gunnar were really come, all hope was lost. She knew Gunnar; he was dull and good-natured, but let him once get vexed, and he grew frantic. "You must not be long in going there," he said.--"There?" shuddered Petra, she jumped to the conclusion that he must have told her mother all about it, and then what would happen?--"Yes, to the Rectory," said the mother. "To the Rectory? Is it Odegaard that has come home?"--The mother turned round now: "Yes, who else?"--"Odegaard!" cried Petra, and the storm of joy cleared the air in an instant: "Odegaard has come, Odegaard, oh! he has got back!" she was out at the door and up over the fields. She rushed on, she laughed, she cried aloud; it was him, him, she wanted; if he had been at home, this trouble would never have come! With him she was safe; if she only thought upon his lofty beaming countenance, his mild voice, even upon the quiet rooms, rich in images, where he dwelt, she grew more peaceful, and a sense of security came over her. She took a moment to collect herself. Landscape and town were bathed in a stream of light, on that early autumn night, the fiord especially shone with a radiant splendour; out there in the haven, the last smoke was curling up from the steamer that had brought Odegaard. Oh! simply to know that he was at home again, did her good, and made her resolute and strong; she prayed to God to help her that Odegaard might never leave her more. And just as her heart was raised in this hope, she saw him coming towards her; he had known which way she would take, and had come to meet her! This touched her, she sprang

towards him, grasped both his hands and kissed them; he felt ashamed, and seeing some one coming in the distance, he drew her with him up among the trees, away from the road; he held her hands in his, and she said the whole way: "How delightful that you have come! No, I can hardly believe it is you, oh! you must never go away again! Do not leave me, no, do not leave me!" Here her tears began to flow, he drew her head gently towards him; he wished to soothe her, for it was needful for his own sake that she should be calm. She crept close to him, as the bird under the wing that is lifted for it, and she did not wish to come forth any more.

Overcome by this confidence, he put his arm round her, as if to provide her the shelter she sought; but hardly had she perceived this, when she lifted her tearful face, her eyes met his, and all that can be exchanged in a glance, when penitence meets love, when gratitude meets the joy of the giver, when yes meets yes, followed in quick succession. He embraced her and pressed his lips against hers; he had lost his mother early, and kissed for the first time in his life; it was the same with her. They could not release themselves, and when at last they did, it was only to embrace once more. He was trembling, whilst she was radiant and blushing; she threw her arms round his neck; she clung to him like a child. And when they seated themselves, and she could play about his hands, his hair, his breast-pin, neckerchief, all these that she had been accustomed to regard respectfully from a distance, and when he bade her say "thou" and not "you," and she could not, and when he would tell her how rich she had made his poor life from the first hour, how long he had fought against it, that he might not check her with this, nor let himself be paid thus, and when he noticed that she was unable to understand or gather a word of what he was saying, and when he himself also no longer found any meaning in it; when she wanted to go home with him at once, and he had laughingly to bid her wait a few days, and then they would go away altogether,--when they felt, when they said, whilst they sat among the trees, with the fiord, and mountains, and evening sun before them, whilst the horn and song sounded far in the distance, that this was

happiness.

Oh! sweet is love's first meeting

In the glow of the evening ray,

As the song of the wavelet fleeting--

Its plash at the close of day.

As the song in the forest sounding,

As the horn o'er the rugged rocks,--

Our hearts, the moment resounding

In wonder to nature locks.

V.

A MISTAKE.

When Odegaard rung for his coffee next morning, he was informed that Yngve Vold, the merchant, had already called twice to see him. It annoyed him to have to hold intercourse with a stranger just then, but one who sought him so early must have an important errand. He was scarcely dressed before Yngve Vold came again. "You are surprised, I dare say? So am I. Good morning!"--They shook hands, and he laid his light hat upon the table. "You rise late, I have been here twice before; I have something important at heart, and I must speak with you!"--"Take a seat if you please!" he seated himself in an easy chair.--"Thank you, thank you, I would rather walk, I am too excited to sit. I am quite beside myself since the day before yesterday, stark mad, neither more nor less; and it is your doing, partly!"--"Mine?"--"Yes, yours. You brought the girl forward, no one thought about her, no one noticed her except you. But now I have never seen, no, as true as I live, never seen anything so matchless, anything so--well isn't it? No, over the whole of

Europe I have never seen such a cursedly curly-haired wonder,--have you? I got no peace, I was bewitched, she was mixed up in everything, I went away, came back again, impossible.--isn't it? Didn't know at first who she was ... the Fisher Girl, they said,--the Senorita they should have called her, the gipsy, the witch; all fire, eyes, bosom, hair,--what?--sparkling, hopping, laughing, trilling, blushing,--something----! Ran after her, you see, up among the trees in the forest, calm evening, ... she stood, I stood, a few words, song, dance,--and then?... well then I gave her my chain, as true as I live, a minute before, I had never thought of it! Next time, same place, same chase, she was afraid, and I;--well,--would you believe it? I could not say a single word, dare not touch her; but when she came back again, would you think it? I proposed to her, I had not thought about it a second before. Now yesterday I was proving myself, stayed away from her, but then faith and soul I'm mad, yes,--I CANNOT, I MUST be with her; if I don't get her I shall shoot myself slap out, there, that's the history. I don't care what my mother says, nor the town, it's no place, no place at all,--she must go away, you see, away, far away from here, she must be 'comme il faut,' go abroad, to France, Paris, I pay, and you arrange. I might go with her myself, live elsewhere, not stay any longer in this little hole; but the fish you see! I'd like to make something out of the place, but it's all in a torpor, no thought, no speculation, but the fish? They don't know how to manage the fish; the Spaniards complain, it must be done in a fresh way, new drying, new curing, the town must rise, business make headway, the fish!--Where was it I left off? the fish, the Fisher Girl,--that suits well: the fish, the Fisher Girl, ha, ha, ha,--to be sure: I pay, you arrange, she shall be my wife, and then----"

Further he did not get; during the conversation he had not observed Odegaard, who had now risen, deathly pale, and stood over him with a fine Spanish cane. The astonishment of the latter is not to be described; he avoided the first strokes. "Take care," said he, "you may hit me!"--"Yes, I may hit you! you see: Spanish, Spanish cane, that suits too!" and the strokes fell over shoulders, arms, hands, face, anywhere

and everywhere; the other rushed about the room: "Are you mad, have you lost your reason;--I will marry her!"--"Out!" cried Odegaard, his strength failing him, and down went the light haired, away from this madman, and was soon standing in the street calling up after his light hat. It was thrown out of the window to him; a heavy fall was heard, and when they went up, Odegaard lay unconscious upon the floor.

All this time Petra was sitting up in her bedroom half dressed, and could not get further the whole day long. Every time she attempted it, her hands sank down upon her lap. Her thoughts bent down as an ear of corn fully ripe, as clustering campanulas in the fields. Calmness, security, waving visions, lay over the airy castles in which she dwelt. She recalled the meeting of yesterday, every word, every look, every touch of the hand, every kiss; she would follow the whole way from the meeting to the parting, but never get to the end; for every single remembrance vanished away in a dream, and all dreams returned again with fair promises. But sweet as were these thoughts, she turned from them to think where she had left off; and as soon as she remembered, she was again carried off into the land of the wonderful.

As she did not come down, the mother concluded that Odegaard having returned, she had begun to study again; she had her meals sent up, and was left alone the whole day. When evening came, she got up to make herself ready to go to meet her beloved; she put on the best she had,--the things she had worn at the confirmation; they were not much, but that she had not felt until now. She had but little sense of the elegant, but she was inspired with it to-day: one thing made another look ugly till the right ones were selected, and even then the whole was not beautiful! To-day she would have given worlds to have been the most beautiful,--with the word a remembrance glided in, which she waved away with her hand; nothing, no nothing should come near that might disturb her. She went about quietly putting her room in order, as it was not yet time to go. She opened the window and looked out; warm, rosy clouds lay encamped over the mountains, but a cooling breeze was wafted in

with a message from the forest near by. "Yes, now I'm coming! now I'm coming!" She went back once again to the looking-glass to study her bride-like feelings.

Then she heard Odegaard's voice down stairs with the mother, heard that he was being directed the way to her room; he had come to fetch her! A feeling of bashful joy took hold of her, she looked round to see if all was in order for him; then she went to the door. "Come in!" she answered softly to the low tap, and stepped back a little.

As an icy shower over her, as if the earth gave way beneath her, was the impression of the face that met her in the door! She staggered back to get hold of the bed-post; her thoughts slipped from one abyss to another; in less than a second she had fallen from earth's happiest bride to its greatest sinner; she heard it thunder out of that face: in time and eternity he could not forgive her!

In scarcely audible tones he whispered: "I see it, you are guilty!" He leaned against the door and held fast to the lock, as if without that he could not stand. His voice trembled; the tears rolled down his face, though his countenance was perfectly calm.

"Do you know what you have done?" and his eyes crushed her to the earth. She did not answer,--did not even weep; she was paralysed by a complete and hopeless inability,--"Once before, I gave my heart away, and he to whom I gave it, died through my fault. I could not rise above this sorrow, unless one should reach over me and give me the wealth of a whole heart again. This you have done,--and you have done it hypocritically!" He stopped: two or three times he tried in vain to begin again, then with a sudden pang of pain: "And all that I have stored up during these years, thought upon thought, you have had the heart to overturn as though it were an image of clay! Child, child, could you not understand that I was building up myself in you? Now it is past! Can you not now comprehend it: all that I have given, the very warmest, the very depths of my heart, lost as flame in the winter air, no token left?--Who are you, unhappy child?--I believed you to be my most sacred treasure,

but alas; you are more than profaned!"--He wept in the bitterness of his grief.

"No, you are too young to comprehend it," he said again; "you know not what you have done.--But yet you must understand," he exclaimed, "what it is, when that which shines upon our lives, that which we believe can yield the flowers and fruit we look for, proves nothing but an enormous deception!--Tell me, what have I done to you that you COULD do anything so cruel? Child, child, had you but told me it yesterday! Why, why, did you lie so fearfully?--It must be my fault, mine, who have instructed you,--have I then forgotten to speak about truth! No,--then where have you thus learnt it?"

She heard him, and it was altogether true. He had tottered to a chair in the window to lean his head against a table standing beside it. He started up again, he wrung his hands, a sob of pain escaped him, then he sank down and was still. "And I, who am not able to help my old father," he said as if to himself, "I CANNOT, I have no calling, I also am to have help from no one, all to be broken in pieces before me, all and everybody forsake me." He was unable to speak more, his head lay in his right hand; the left hung powerlessly down; he looked as though he could not move,--and thus he remained sitting and said nothing. Then he felt something warm against the hand that was hanging down, and startled, he drew it away, it was Petra's breath; she was on her knees beside him, her head bent down, now she folded her hands, and looked up to him with an inexpressible entreaty for mercy. He looked down at her, and neither of them turned away. Then he lifted his hand preventingly against her, as if he felt within him a voice of persuasion that he would not hear,--bent hastily down for his hat that had fallen on the floor, and went quickly to the door; but still more quickly she stopped the way before him, she cast herself down, grasped hold of his knees, and nailed her eyes into him, but all without a sound; he both saw and felt that she was struggling for life. Then his old love was too strong, he bent down once more over her, and with an expressive look, but one that was full of pain, he threw his arms round her and drew her up to him. Yet once more she lay upon his breast,

but it groaned and sighed within, like an organ after the last stroke, when there is still air, but no more tone. Again and again he pressed her to his heart;--for the last time! He left her with a passionate cry; "No, no!--you can abandon yourself, but you cannot love!" He was overwhelmed with emotion: "Unhappy child, your future I cannot guide; may God forgive you that you have ruined mine!" He went past her, she did not move, he opened the door and shut it again, she did not speak;--she heard him on the stairs, she heard his last step on the flagstone and down the road,--then she was released, and gave one cry, a single one, but with this came the mother.

When Petra came to herself again, she was lying in bed undressed and well nursed; before her sat the mother with her arms upon her knees; her head in both her hands, and eyes of fire fastened upon her daughter. "Have you read enough with him now?" she asked:--"Have you learnt something?--What is it you are going to be now?"--Petra answered with an outburst of grief. The mother sat and listened to this for a long time, then said with strange solemnity: "May the Lord heartily curse him!"--The daughter started up: "Mother, mother! Not him, not him, but me, me,--not him!"--"Oh; I know them! I know who should have it!"--"No mother, he has been deceived, dreadfully deceived, and that by me, me--it is I who have deceived him!"--She told the whole story hurriedly and sobbing; he must not for a moment be misjudged; she told about Gunnar, and what she had asked of him, how she had hardly understood at the time, what she was doing; next about Yngve Vold's unlucky gold chain, that had taught her so much, and got her so fearfully entangled, and then about Odegaard, how on seeing him, she had forgotten all else. She could not understand how it had all happened, but this she did understand, that she had sinned deeply against them all, and especially against him who had taken her up, and given her all that one human being can give to another. After sitting long silent, at last the mother said: "Then you have committed no sin against ME? Where have I been all this time that you have never said a word to me?"--"Oh! mother, help me, don't be hard on me now; I feel that I shall suffer for it as long as I live; but I shall

pray to God that He will let me soon die!--Dear, dear God," she began, as she folded her hands and looked up to Heaven, "dear, dear God, hear me, I have already forfeited my life; there is nothing more for me, I am not fit, I do not know how to live, then, dear God, I pray Thee suffer me to die!"--But Gunlaug, who had hard words uppermost, stifled them, and laid her hand on the daughter's arm, to take it down from such a prayer: "Govern your feelings, child, do not tempt God;--we must live even if it is painful." She drew several heavy sighs and rose up; she had no consolation to offer. The daughter had no doubt now given her entire confidence, but it was too late. Gunlaug never more set foot within that little attic chamber.

Odegaard had taken an illness, that seemed likely to be a dangerous one, so his old father had gone up, and made his study beside him, saying to all who begged him to spare himself, that he could not do it; his work was to watch over his son, each time he lost one of those whom he loved better than his father.

It was thus that matters stood when Gunnar came home.

He frightened his mother by showing himself long before the ship he sailed with,--she thought it was his ghost, and his acquaintances were not much better. To all their curious inquiries, he could give but an unsatisfactory reply. They, however, soon got a better one, for the very day that he came, he was turned out of Gunlaug's house, and that by Gunlaug herself. "Never let me see you here again," she called out, to him on the doorstep, so that it could be heard far and near, "we have had enough of this now!" He had not gone far, before a girl overtook him with a parcel; she had another as well, and made a mistake, and Gunnar found in his a heavy gold chain; he stood looking at it a minute, and turning it over; he had not understood Gunlaug's fury before, but he understood still less why she should send him a gold chain. He called the girl back, she must have made a mistake, and she asked as she gave him the other parcel if it was this. The parcel proved to contain his gifts to Petra. Yes, that was it; but who was to have the gold chain? "Yngve Vold, the

Merchant," replied the girl, and went her way. Gunnar stood musing: Yngve Vold the Merchant? Does he give presents?--and Gunlaug has stumbled upon them! Then it is HE who has stolen her from me,--Yngve Vold,--but he shall----his vexation and excitement must have vent, some one must be thrashed, and it proved to be Yngve Vold.

To relate shortly: the unhappy merchant was once again attacked quite unexpectedly, and that upon his own door step. He ran into the office to escape from the infuriated man, but Gunnar ran after him. The clerks rose up "en masse" against him, but he kicked and struck on all sides; chairs, tables, and desks were overthrown; letters, papers, and journals flew about like dust; help came at last from Yngve's warehouse, and after a hard fight, Gunnar was turned into the street.

But here the battle began again in earnest. There were two ships lying on the quay, and one of them was from abroad; being about noon, when the sailors were at liberty, they were glad to join in the fun; they rushed into the fight, crew against crew, many others were sent for, and came running at double quick pace; labouring people, women and children drew up, till at last there was no one who knew why or against whom they were fighting. In vain the captains cursed; in vain the citizens commanded that the only policeman should be sent for: he was just then out on the fiord, fishing. They ran to the magistrate, who was also postmaster; but he had locked himself in with the post that had just arrived, and answered out of the window, that he could not come; his assistant was at a funeral, they must wait. But as they could not wait, several shouted, and especially frightened women, that Arne the blacksmith should be sent for. This being decided by the worthy citizens, his own wife was despatched to seek him, "for the policeman was not at home." He soon came, to the mirth of the school boys; he made a few strokes among the crowd, picked out a burly Spaniard, and struck him promiscuously against the rest.

When all was settled, there came the magistrate with a stick; he found a few old

women and children, talking on the field of battle; these he sternly commanded to go home to dinner, which he also did himself.

But the next day he began to look into the matter, the investigation was continued for a time, though no one had the slightest idea who had been the aggrieving parties. One thing, however, all were agreed upon, that Arne the blacksmith had been mingled in the fray, as they had seen him striking on all sides with the Spaniard. For this Arne had to pay one specie dollar fine, for which his wife, who had led him into it, got sundry blows the second Sunday after trinity, which she might well remember. That was the only judicial consequence of the fray.

But it had other consequences. The little town was no longer a quiet town, the Fisher Girl had put it in commotion. The strangest rumours were set afloat,--arising from angry jealousy at her having been able to win to herself the best head in the place, and its two wealthiest matches, besides having several in the background; for Gunnar had grown by degrees into "several young men." Soon there arose a general moral storm. The disgrace of a great street brawl, and sorrow in three of the best families rested on the head of the young girl who had been but half a year confirmed; three engagements at one time, and one of them with her teacher,--her life's benefactor! Indignation might well boil up. Had she not been, from a child, an annoyance to the town, and for all that, had she not had its expectancy manifested in gifts when Odegaard took her up, and had she not now scorned them all, crushed him, and following the instincts of her nature, thrown herself recklessly on a course that would lead to her being an outcast from society, with the gaol for old age?

The mother must have been to blame too; in her sailors' house the child had learnt to be giddy. They would no longer bear the yoke that Gunlaug laid upon them, they would no longer tolerate them, neither mother nor daughter, they would unite to drive them away.

One night a crowd gathered on the bank; there were sailors, who owed Gunlaug

money, drunken labourers, for whom she would not procure work, young lads, to whom she would not give credit, and the better class in the back ground. They whistled, they shouted, they called for The Fisher Girl, for Fisher Gunlaug; by and bye a stone was thrown against the door, then another in at the attic window. They did not go away until after midnight. Behind the windows all was dark and still.

The next day not a soul looked in to Gunlaug, not even a child went past, up the hill. But at night the same riot again, only that now all were there without distinction. They broke all the windows, they tore up the garden, and trampled down the shrubs, they threw the young fruit trees about, and then they sang:--

Mother, I've fished up a sailor, oh!

"Ah! have you so?"

Mother, I've fished up a merchant, oh!

"Ah! have you so?"

Mother, I've fished up a pastor's son

"The best you've won!"

Ah! ding dong,

The nose grows long.[1]

Great fishes may bite, but what is the gain,

If into the basket, they ne'er can be ta'en!

Mother, he's gone, the sailor, oh!

"Ah! has he so!"

Mother, he's gone, the merchant, oh!

"Ah! has he so?"

Mother, the pastor's son's going they say!

"Then haul away!"--

Ah! ding dong,

The nose grows long,

Great fishes may bite, but what is the gain,

If into the basket, they ne'er can be ta'en!

They called especially for Gunlaug, they would have been mightily pleased to have heard her matchless fury rage.

Gunlaug was sitting within, and heard every word; but she kept silence; one must be able to bear something for the sake of one's child.

VI.

THE SOUND OF THE CLOCK.

Petra had been in her room, when the shouting, whistling, and hallooing had begun the first evening. She sprang up as if the house had been on fire, or as if everything were coming down upon her. She ran about in her room as if whipped with burning rods; it burnt through her soul; her thoughts ran impetuously after an outlet;--but down to the mother she dare not go, and they were standing in front of the only window! A stone came flying through, and fell upon her bed; she gave a cry and ran into a corner behind a curtain, and hid herself among her old clothes. There she sat crouched up together, burning with shame, trembling with fear, visions of unknown horrors passed before her, the air was full of faces, gaping, mocking faces, they came quite near, it rained fire round about them;--oh, not fire, but eyes; it rained eyes, large, glowing and small, sparkling; eyes that stood still, eyes that ran up and down,--Jesus, Jesus, save me!

Oh, what a relief, when the last cry died away in the night, and it was quite dark, and quite still. She ventured out, threw herself on the bed, and buried her face in the pillow, but she could not turn away from her thoughts; the mother would come

powerfully and threateningly forward, as thunder clouds gather over the mountains, for what would the mother not suffer for her sake! No slumber came to her eyelids, nor peace to her soul, and the day came, but no alleviation.

She went backwards and forwards, backwards and forwards, thinking only how to escape, but she dare not meet her mother, neither dare she go out as long as it was day, and at night they would come again! Yet wait she must, for before midnight it was still more dangerous to flee. And then where to? She possessed nothing, and she knew not any way; yet there must be merciful hearts somewhere, even as there was a merciful God. He knew that the evil she had done was not done in wickedness, He knew her penitence, and He also knew her helplessness. She listened for her mother's steps below, but she did not hear them; she trembled to hear her on the stairs, but she did not come. The girl, too, must have left, for no one came up with her meals. She did not venture to go down, nor to go to the window, for some one might be standing outside waiting for her. The broken pane let in the cold air, in the morning, and still more when night came. She had made up a small bundle of clothes, and dressed herself to be ready; but she must wait for the furious crowd, and then go through whatever came.

There they are again! The whistling, the shouting, the throwing of stones, worse, far worse than the night before; she crept into her corner, folded her hands, and prayed and prayed. If only her mother did not go out to them, if only they did not break in! Then they began to sing, a base lampoon, and though every word cut her with knives, she was yet obliged to listen; but no sooner had she heard that the mother was mixed up with it, that they had been guilty of so shameful an injustice, than she sprang up, she would speak to the dastardly pack from the window, or cast herself down among them;--but a stone, and yet another, and then a whole hailstorm flew through the window, the bits of glass whizzed, the stones rolled about the room, and she crept back again. The perspiration stood upon her forehead, as though she were beneath a burning sun, but she no longer wept,--no longer felt afraid.

Gradually the noise subsided; she ventured forth, and was going to the window to look out, but she trod upon the bits of glass and drew back, then she trod upon the stones, and stood still that she might not be heard; for she must steal quietly away. After waiting a full half hour, she put off her shoes, took up her bundle, and softly opened the door. It pained her to think that after causing her mother all this sorrow, she must leave her without a farewell; but fear overpowered her; "Farewell mother! farewell mother!" she whispered to herself at each step she took down the stairs: "Farewell mother!"--She stood at the bottom, breathed a few times heavily to get air, and then turned towards the passage door. Some one seized her arm from behind, she gave a slight scream, and turned,--it was her mother.

Gunlaug having heard the door open, at once divined her daughter's intention and waited for her here. Petra felt that she could not pass without a contest. Explanation would not help; whatever she said, it would not be believed. Well, if it came to a struggle, nothing in the world could be worse than the worst, and that she had already experienced. "Where are you going?" the mother asked in a low tone. "I must flee!" she answered with a beating heart--"Where to?"--"I do not know;--but I must get away from here!"--She held her bundle faster and went on. "No, come with me," said the mother, holding her arm, "I have provided for it." Petra released herself, as if from too tight a grasp; breathed out as after a conflict, and gave herself up to her mother. The latter led the way into a little room behind the kitchen, where a light was burning, and there was no window;--here she had been hid whilst the tumult raged. The room was so narrow that they could scarcely move in it; the mother took up a bundle rather smaller than Petra's, opened it, and took out a set of sailor's clothes. "Put these on," she whispered. Petra at once comprehended why she should do it, but that the mother assigned no reason, touched her. She took off her own things and put on these; the mother assisted her, and in doing so, the light fell full upon her face; Petra saw for the first time that Gunlaug was old. Had she become so in these days, or had Petra not observed it before? The child's tears

trickled down over the mother, but she did not look up, and so nothing was said. A sou'wester was the last thing to put on; when all was ready, the mother took the bundle from her, and blew out the light, "Now come!"

They went out into the passage, but not through the street door; Gunlaug unfastened the back door, and locked it again after them. They passed through the trampled garden, over the uprooted trees, and the broken fence, "You may as well look round," said the mother, "you will never come here again."--She shuddered but did not look. They went by the upper path, along the edge of the forest, where she had passed half her life; where she had had that evening with Gunnar, those with Yngve Vold, and the last with Odegaard. They trod in withered leaves; it was a cold night, and she shivered in her unaccustomed dress. The mother turned towards a garden; Petra knew it again, though she had not been, there since that day when as a child she had attacked it; it was Pedro Ohlsen's. The mother had the key of it and locked them in.

It had cost Gunlaug much to go to him in the forenoon, it cost her much to go now with the unhappy daughter, to whom she herself could no longer give a home. But it must be done, and that which must be done Gunlaug could do. She knocked at the side door, and almost directly they heard footsteps and saw a light within. Shortly after, the door was opened by Pedro himself in travelling attire, looking pale and nervous. He held a dip in his hand, and he sighed when his eye fell upon Petra's face, swollen with weeping; she looked up at him, but as he did not dare to know her, she did not venture to recognise him. "This man has promised to help you to get away," said the mother without looking at either of them, and going up the steps she went into Pedro's room on the other side of the passage, leaving them to follow. The room was very small and low, and the peculiar close smell that pervaded it, made Petra feel faint; for more than a day now she had neither tasted food nor slept. From the middle of the ceiling hung a cage with a canary bird; they had to go round to avoid knocking against it. Some heavy old chairs, a ponderous table, and two great closets,

touching the ceiling, were squeezed into the room, making it still less. On the table lay some music, and on that a flute. Pedro Ohlsen shuffled about in his great boots, as if he had something important to do; a weak voice sounded from the back room: "Who is that?--Who has come in?"--upon which he trailed still quicker round the room, mumbling: "Oh it is--hm, hm, ... it is--hm, hm," and so in where the voice came from.

Gunlaug sat by the window, with both her elbows upon her knees, and her head in her hands, looking fixedly into the sand that was strewn upon the floor; she did not speak, but every now and then she drew a heavy sigh. Petra stood by the door, leaning against the wall, with both her hands over her bosom, for she felt ill. An old time piece was hacking the hours asunder, the tallow candle on the table was running down, with a long wick. The mother was wishful to give some excuse for their being here, and said: "I knew this man once, long ago."

Nothing more, and no reply. Pedro did not return, the candle continued to waste, and the old clock to hack. The feeling of faintness overpowered Petra more and more, and through all, the words were continually sounding in her ears, "I knew this man once, long ago!" The old clock began to go to it: "I-knew-this-man-once-long-a-go." Afterwards, whenever she came into a close atmosphere, this room was always before her, reminding her of the faintness and of the clock's "I-knew-this-man-once-long-ago!"

When Pedro came in again he had got on a woollen cap, and a cloak of ancient date, fastened up over his ears. "Now, I am ready," said he, and drew on his mittens, as if he were going out in the coldest winter weather. "But we must not forget"--he turned round,--"the cloak for--for--" he looked at Petra, and from her to Gunlaug, who took up a blue coat hanging over a chair back, and helped Petra on with it; but when it came close under her nose, it smelled so strongly of the room, that she begged for fresh air; the mother saw that she looked ill, and opening the door, she led her

quickly into the garden. Here she drew a few long draughts of the fresh autumn air. "Where am I going to?" she asked, when she began to come round.--"To Bergen," replied the mother, helping her to button the coat; "it is a large place, where no one knows you." When she was ready, Gunlaug stopped in the doorway: "You will have 100 specie dollars with you; if you don't get on, you still have something to fall back upon. He lends you them, he here,"--"Gives, gives," whispered Pedro, who passed them and went out into the street.--"Lends them," repeated the mother, as though he had said nothing: "I shall repay him."--She took a handkerchief from her neck, tied it round Petra's, and said: "You must write as soon as it goes well with you, not before."--"Mother!"--"He will row you on board the vessel lying out there."--"Oh, heavens, mother!"--"Well, then there's nothing more. I'm not going any further."--"Mother, mother!"--"Now God be with you. Farewell!"--"Mother, forgive me, mother!"--"And don't catch cold on the sea."--She had got her gradually outside the garden gate, and now shut it.

Petra stood looking at the closed gate; she felt about as wretched and lonely as it is possible for a human being to do,--but just at that moment, out of the misery, the injustice, the tears, sprang up an anticipation, a hope; as a gleam of fire, kindled and extinguished, blazing up and dying out again, but for one moment shining sublimely; she opened her eyes, the brightness was gone, and again she stood in darkness.

Quietly through the deserted streets of the little town, past the closed doors and leafless gardens, past the barred houses, where the lights were no longer burning,--she dragged herself after him, who with bent figure shuffled on, without any head, in the great boots, and cloak. They came out into the avenue, where they trod again in withered leaves, and saw the ghostly branches that seemed stretching out their arms to come after them. They scrambled down over the mountain behind the yellow boat house; he baled out the water, and then rowed her along the coast that now looked like one black mass, with the clouds laying heavily upon it.

Everything was blotted out, fields, houses, woods, mountains, she saw nothing more of that which, until yesterday, from a child she had had daily before her eyes; it had shut itself up like the town, like the people, that night that she was driven away, and she got no farewell.

A man was pacing up and down the deck of the ship that was laying at anchor, waiting for the morning breeze; as soon as he saw them laying to, he let down the steps, helped them on board, and made a signal to the captain, who soon joined them. She knew them, and they knew her, but simply as an ordinary matter, she was told all that it was necessary for her to know; namely, where she was to sleep, and what she was to do if she wanted anything, or was sea-sick. She was ill, indeed, almost directly she got down, so on changing her dress she went up again. Here she found the smell of--oh, chocolate! She felt an immoderate hunger, and just then out of the cabin, came the same man that had received them, with a whole bowl full, and plenty of cakes; it was from her mother, he said. While she was eating, he told her further, that a box with her linen, flannels, and best clothes had also been sent on board by her mother, besides several good things to eat. On hearing this, a very vivid remembrance of her mother rose up before her, an exalted image, such as she had never before had, but which she retained the rest of her life. And above the image rested a hope, sure and yet sorrowful in prayer, that she might yet give her mother some joy for all the sorrow she had caused her.

Pedro Ohlsen sat beside her when she sat, and walked beside her when she walked; he was perpetually occupied in getting out of her way, and for that reason, was continually getting into it, as the deck was covered with goods. She could see only his great nose and his eyes, and not even these distinctly, but he gave the impression of having something on his mind, which he wished to say and could not. He sighed, he sat down, he got up, he went round her, sat down again, but never a word came forth, and she did not speak. At last he was obliged to give it up; he drew out a huge leather pocket book, and whispered that the 100 species were within, and a little

besides. She held out her hand and thanked him, and in doing so she came so near his face, that she observed his eyes were moist and were anxiously following her. For, with her, he was in truth losing all that was left to his desolate life. He would like to have said something that might yield him a kind remembrance, when he should be no more; but it was forbidden him, and though he would have said it nevertheless, he could not manage it, for she did not help him! Petra was too tired, and she could not just then banish the thought that he had been the cause of her first sin against her mother. She could not bear it much longer, it grew worse instead of better the longer he sat, for people are easily annoyed when they are tired. The poor creature felt it, he MUST go, and so at last he got whispered, "farewell," and drew his shrunken hand out of the mitten; she laid hers warm within it, and then both arose. "Thank you,--and give my love to mother!" she said. He gave a sigh, or rather a sob, and with two or three more such, he left her, turned and went backwards down the ladder. She went to the railing, he looked up, nodded, and then rowed slowly away. She stood till he was darkness in the darkness, then she went below; she was so tired she could scarcely stand, and although she felt ill directly she went down, she had scarcely laid her head upon the pillow and said the first two clauses of "The Lord's Prayer," before she slept.

Till that same hour, the mother was sitting up by the yellow boat-house; she had followed them slowly all the way, and sat down behind the boat-house just as they were rowing from land. From that same spot, Pedro Ohlsen had in former days rowed out with her; it was a long time ago, but she could not fail to remember it now, when he rowed the daughter away.

As soon as she saw him coming back alone, she arose and went; for then she knew that Petra was safely on board. She did not take the road home, but went further over: there, in the darkness, she found the path that led over the mountains, and that she took. Her house stood empty and desolate for more than a month, she would not return to it, before she had had good news from her daughter.

But this gave time for the voice against her to be put to the test. All low natures feel an exciting pleasure in uniting to persecute the strong; but only as long as these offer any resistance; when they see that they quietly suffer themselves to be maltreated, a feeling of shame comes over them, and he who will cast another stone is quickly put down. In the present instance, they had been hoping to see Gunlaug come fuming out to them in a rage, perhaps calling upon the seamen to take up arms in her defence, and thus have a regular street fight. But as she did not shew herself, on the third night the people were scarcely to be restrained; they declared they would go in after her, they would turn the two women out into the streets, and chase them away from the town! The windows had not been mended since the previous night, and amid the shout of hurrahs, two men crept through to open the door,--and in rushed the crowd! They looked in all the rooms, upstairs and down, they broke open the doors, destroyed everything that came in their way; they sought in every corner; last of all in the cellar, but neither mother nor daughter were to be found. As soon as this discovery was made, an instantaneous hush fell over the people; they who were in, stole out one after another, and hid themselves behind the rest, and shortly after, the plot of ground in front of the house was left desolate.

There were soon found those in the town, who said that this had been an undignified mode of proceeding against two defenceless women. They discussed the facts of the case so thoroughly, that at last it was the unanimous opinion, that whatever the Fisher Girl had done, Gunlaug was certainly not to blame for it, and she had therefore been treated very unjustly.

She was very much missed in the place; drunken brawls and tumults began to be the order of the day; for the town had lost its police. They missed her tall figure in the doorway as they passed by; the seamen especially felt her loss. There was no place like hers, they said; for there each had been dealt with according to his merit, had had his own place in her confidence, and her help in any difficulty. Neither sailors, nor captains, neither masters, nor mistresses, had understood her worth, until now

when she had gone.

Therefore it was a cause of general rejoicing, when it was reported that Gunlaug had been seen sitting in her house and cooking as before. Every one must see for himself that the window panes were really put in again, the door repaired and the smoke coming out of the chimney. Yes, it was true! There she was again!--They crept on the other side of the hill to see better; she was sitting in front of the baking stone, she looked neither up nor down, but her eye followed her hand and her hand was busy; for she had come back to regain what she had lost, and first of all the 100 specie, that she owed Pedro Ohlsen. At first they contented themselves in this way, with merely peeping in at her, their consciences pricked them, so they dare not do more. But by degrees they came,--first the wives, the friendly, kind ones; yet they got no opportunity to speak of anything but business; for Gunlaug would hear nothing more. Then came the fishermen, then the merchants and captains, and last of all, on the first Sunday, the sailors. It must have been by agreement, for in the evening, just at one time, the house was so overflowing with people that not only were both rooms full, but the tables and chairs that stood in the garden in summer, had to be brought in, and set in the passages, in the kitchen, in the back room. No one who saw this assembly would suspect the feeling with which the people were sitting there; for the very moment that they crossed her threshold, she had taken her quiet command over them, and the decision with which she dealt to each his due, kept down every inquiry, every welcome. She was the same; only her hair was no longer black, and her manner a little more quiet. But when their spirits began to rise, they could no longer contain themselves, and every time that Gunlaug and the girl went out of the room, they called out to Knud the Boatman, who had always been Gunlaug's favorite, to drink her health when she came back. But he did not get courage to do it, till he was a little warmer in the head; at last, however, when she came in to collect the empty bottles and glasses, he got up, and said, "That it was a right good thing she had come back;--for there wasn't the least doubt, that----that it

was a right good thing she had come back!" The others thought it was very well said, and they rose up, and shouted: "Yes, it was a right good thing!" and they in the passage, and in the kitchen, and in the other rooms, also rose up to join in the decision; the boatman gave her the glass and cried, "Hurrah!" and the others shouted "Hurrah!" enough to lift the roof and carry it up to the skies. Soon one of them acknowledged that they had done her shameful injustice, then another swore to the same, and soon the whole house were condemning themselves that they had done her the most shameful wrong. When at last there was a lull, because they wanted a word from herself, Gunlaug said that she must thank them very much; "but," continued she, as she once more gathered up the empty bottles and glasses,--"as long as I don't mention it, you needn't do so." When she; had gathered up what she could carry, she went out and came in again for the remainder, and from that hour, she held undisputed sway.

VII.

THE FIRST ACT.

It was evening and quite dusk when the vessel cast anchor in the harbour of Bergen. Petra half stupified from sea-sickness, was led in the captain's boat, through a multiplicity of ships large and small, till at last they emerged at the quay, which was covered with ferrymen, the narrow alleys leading to it swarming with peasants and street boys.

They stopped before a neat little house, where at the request of the Captain, an old woman gave Petra a most kind reception. She stood in need of rest and sleep, and both of these she obtained. Lively and well, she awoke next day at noon, to new sounds and a new dialect, and when the blind was drawn up, to a new landscape, new people, and a new town. She had become new herself she thought, as she stood before the looking glass,--that face was not the old one. True, she could not define

the difference, and did not understand that at her age, trouble and sorrow have a refining, spiritualising influence; but seeing herself in the glass, made her think of the last nights, and trembling at the remembrance, she hastened to make herself ready to go down to the new life awaiting her. There, she met her hostess, and several ladies, who, after eyeing her profoundly, promised to do what they could for her, and began by taking her round the town. Having several things to buy, she ran up for her pocket book, but she felt ashamed to take the thick clumsy old thing down stairs, so she opened it, to take out the money there. Instead of 100 specie dollars she found 300! That must be Pedro Ohlsen again, who against her mother's will and knowledge had given her money. She had so little understanding about the worth of things, that the greatness of the sum did not astonish her; neither did it strike her therefore, to seek further for the cause of such great benevolence. Instead of a glowing letter of thanks with questions indicating a suspicion of the truth Pedro Ohlsen got a letter sent down from Gunlaug, and addressed to herself, wherein the daughter with undisguised annoyance, betrayed her benefactor, and asked what she was to do with the gift thus clandestinely made her.

Petra's first impression of the town, was entirely ruled by the power of the elements. She could not divest herself of the feeling that the mountains stood so close over her, that she must take care. She felt burdened every time she looked up to them, and then again, an inclination prompted her to stretch out her hand and knock at them; sometimes she felt as though there were no outlet at all. There stood the mountains, sunless and dark, the clouds hung close over them, or were chased hurriedly away; wind and rain vied incessantly with each other. But on the people around her was no burden resting, she was soon happy among them; for there was in their busy activity a freedom, ease and gaiety, which, after what she had passed through, she felt to be as smiles and welcome.

When the next day she remarked at the dinner table, that she liked to be where there were a number of people, they told her that she should go to the theatre, for there she

would meet with many hundreds in one house. Yes, she would like that; the ticket was taken, the theatre was near at hand, and at the appointed time, she was taken there, and shewn to a seat in the first tier of the gallery. There she sat among many hundred happy people, in a dazzling light, surrounded by brilliant colours, and conversation breaking in upon her from all corners, with the noise of ocean.

Petra had not the slightest idea of what she was about to see. She knew nothing but what Odegaard had told her, and what by chance she had heard from others. But of the theatre Odegaard had never spoken; the sailors had merely talked of one where there were wild animals and horse-riders, and to the lads it never occurred to talk about the play, even if those from the school knew a little about it; for the little town had no theatre of its own, not even a house that was called such; travelling menageries, rope-dancers, and harlequins used to exhibit either in booths, or in the open field. She was so ignorant, that she did not even ask any questions, but was sitting boldly expecting something wonderful, e.g. camels or apes. Taken up by this idea, by degrees she began to see animals in all the faces around her, horses, dogs, foxes, cats, mice, and so amused herself. Meanwhile the orchestra had assembled without her being aware of it. She jumped up in a fright, for a short sharp burst from trombones, drums, trumpets, and horns, opened the overture. She had never in her life heard more music at one time, than a couple of violins and perhaps a flute. This pealing grandeur turned her pale, it partook of the nature of a cold, dark, heavy sea, she sat in dread for the next lest it should be still worse, and yet she did not wish it to be over. By and bye softer harmonies arose, vistas that she had never even dreamt of, opened before her; melodies lulled her thither, life and merriment floated in the air, the whole march rose upwards as on wings, it went softly down, it gathered again powerfully, it parted quiveringly and sprightfully,--till a sombre gloom fell over all; it was as if it were whirled away in a crashing waterfall. Then arose a single tone like a bird on a wet branch by the deep; sadly and timidly it began, but the air above it, cleared as it sang, a gleam of sunshine came,--and again the long blue vista

was filled with that wonderful wave and fluttering behind the rays of the sun; when this had lasted a moment, lo! it subsided in gentle peace; the exultant host withdrew further and further, nothing was to be seen but the rays of the sun oozing and fusing through the air,--over the whole of the endless plain, only sun, over all light and stillness,--and in this blessedness it died away. Involuntarily she arose, for she felt it was over. Oh marvel! there went the beautiful painted wall in front of her straight up through the roof! She was in a church, a church with pillars and arches, beautifully decorated; the organ was pealing, and people advancing towards her, in a strange garb, and they were talking,--yes, talking in church, and in a language she did not understand. What? They were talking also behind her: "Sit down!" they said, but there was nothing there to sit upon, and the two in church continued to stand too; as she looked at them, it came clearly to her mind, that the dress was the same as that she had seen in a picture of St. Olaf,--and there they were calling St. Olaf's name!--"Sit down!" sounded again from behind her; "sit down!" cried a great many voices,--"there is perhaps something behind as well," thought Petra, turning round. A sea of angry threatening faces met her gaze;--"there's something wrong here," she thought, and wanted to get away; but an old woman who sat next to her, pulled her gently by the dress: "Come, sit down, child," she whispered, "you know they behind cannot see!" She was in her place in a moment; for to be sure: that is the theatre, and we are looking on,--the theatre! she repeated the word, as if to recall herself. Then she was in the church again; notwithstanding all her endeavours, she could not understand the speaker; but when she fairly discovered that he was a young, handsome man, she began to understand a word now and then, and when she heard that he was in love, and love was his theme, she understood most of all. Then a third came in, who, for an instant, drew her attention away, for she knew from drawings that he must be a monk, and a monk she had a great desire to see. He trod so softly, was so quiet, yes, he must in truth be a godfearing man; he spoke slowly, distinctly, she followed every word. But the next minute, he turned and said exactly the

opposite of what he had said before,--heavens! he's a scoundrel, he's a scoundrel! he has the look of it! And this young handsome man cannot see it! he might at all events hear it! "He is deceiving you!" she whispered, half aloud. "Hush!" said the old lady. No, the young man does not hear, he withdraws in good faith, they all go, and an old man comes in alone. How is this? When the old man speaks, it is just as if the young one was speaking, and yet it is the old man, ... oh! look there! look there! a shining procession of girls, all in white, two and two they pass silently through the church; she saw them long after they had gone by,--and a similar impression from her childhood hovered in her memory. One winter she had gone with her mother over the mountain; making their way in the new fallen snow, they had startled a covey of ptarmigans, that with one accord, flew up in front of them; they were white, the snow was white, the forest white,--long after, all her thoughts rose white before her, and now the same thing again. But one of these maidens robed in white, steps forth alone, with a wreath in her hand, and kneels, the old man has knelt also, and she talks to him, he has brought messages and a letter for her from foreign lands, he brings it out,--her face tells clearly, it is from one she loves, oh! how delightful, they all seem to love here! She opens it,--it is not a letter, it is full of music,--yes, see, yes, see! he himself is the letter, the old man is the young one, and he is the one she loves! They embrace, heavens, they kiss each other,--Petra felt she grew scarlet, and hid her face with her hands, while she watched further;--listen, he is telling her that they will soon get married; and she laughingly pulls his beard, and says he has grown a barbarian, and he says she has grown so lovely, and he gives her a ring, and promises her scarlet and velvet, gold slippers, and a golden belt; he merrily takes his leave, and goes to the king to arrange about their wedding. His betrothed looks after him, and her eye glistens, but turning round without him, all seems so empty!

There slides the wall down again. Over now? just as it began? Blushing, she turned to the old lady: "Is it over?"--"No, no, child, it is the first act. There are five such,

yes indeed there are," she repeated with a sigh: "There are five such."--"About the same?" asked Petra. "What do you mean by that?"--"The same people come in again, and it all goes on further?" "Then you have never been at a comedy?"--"No."--"Well, in many places there is no theatre, it is so expensive." "But whatever is this?" asked Petra anxiously, staring as if she couldn't wait for a reply: "Who are these people?"--"A company that Director Naso has, a first class company; he is very clever."--"Does he invent it?--or what is it? Pray do tell me!"--"Dear child, do you really not know what a play is? Where are you from?" But when Petra thought of her native place, she thought also of her shame, her flight, she did not speak and dare not ask any more questions.

The second act came, and with it the king, then she really got to see a king too! She did not hear what he said, she did not see whom he talked to, she was observing the king's dress, the king's manners, the king's bearing; she was first recalled, when the young man came in again and now they all withdrew to bring in the bride! So she must wait once more.

Between the acts, the old lady bent over towards her: "Don't you think they play beautifully?" she said. Petra looked up astonished at her. "Play,--what do you mean?" She id not see that everybody round about was looking at her, and that the old woman had been deputed to ask her, nor did she hear that they sat and laughed at her. "But they don't speak like we do?" she asked, as she did not get any reply. "They are Danes of course," said the lady and began to laugh herself. Then Petra understood that the good woman was laughing at her many questions, and was silent; she looked stedfastly at the curtain.

When it went up again, she had the great pleasure of seeing an archbishop. It was now the same as before; she was lost in the sight and did not hear a word of what he said. But then came music, oh so softly, so far away, but it was coming nearer; female voices were singing, and the play of flutes and violins, and an instrument, it

was not a guitar, and yet like many guitars, but softer, fuller, loftier in its tone, the entire harmony poured in in long waves,--and as if all were a blending of colouring, came the procession, soldiers carrying halberds, choristers bearing censors, monks holding candles, the king wearing his crown, and the bridegroom arrayed in white, at his side,--then the white robed maidens strewing flowers and music before the bride, who was attired in white silk, and wore a red wreath: at her side walked a tall lady with a purple train adorned with gold crowns, and a little sparkling crown on her head, that must be the queen! The whole church was filled with their song and colours, and all that now happened, from the bridegroom leading the bride to the altar where they knelt, the whole company kneeling with them,--to the archbishop coming in pomp with his brethren, were only fresh links in the tinted music chain.

But just as the ceremony was about to take place, the Archbishop waved his staff, and forbade it; their marriage was against the holy scriptures, here on earth they could never be united,--oh heavens have mercy,--the bride sank down, and with a piercing cry, Petra, who had risen, also fell!

"Water, bring water!" cried those around her.

"No," replied the old lady, "there is no need, she has not fainted!" "No need," they repeated, "silence!"----"Silence!" they cried from the parquet, "silence in the gallery!"--"Silence!" answered those above.--"You must not take it so much to heart; it is only fiction and nonsense altogether," whispered the old lady; "but Madame Naso plays wonderfully."

"Silence!" now exclaimed Petra herself; she was already deep in the acting, for the devilish monk had come forward with a sword, the two lovers had to hold a handkerchief and he rent it asunder between them,--as the church rent, as grief rent, as the sword over the gate of paradise rent that first day. Weeping maidens took the red wreath from the bride, and replaced it with a white one; thereby she was sealed to the cloister for life. He to whom she belonged in time and eternity, he should

know her to be alive, yet lost to him, know her to be within, yet never see her; now dilacerating the farewell they took, there was no greater suffering upon earth than theirs!--

"Mercy," whispered the old lady, when the curtain fell: "don't be so foolish; you know it is only Madame Naso, the director's wife." Petra stared at the old lady, she thought she must be crazy and as the latter had long thought the same of her, they continued to look a little askance at each other, but did not speak any more.

Petra could not follow the scene when the curtain rose; the bride within the convent, and the bridegroom day and night in doubt without the walls, was what she saw, she suffered their suffering, she prayed their prayers; but that which took place before her eyes, passed unheeded by. An ominous silence fell over all, and this brought her to herself; the church seemed to grow larger, the twelve strokes of the clocks sounded in empty space; it rumbled under the arches, the walls shook, St. Olaf had risen from his tomb, and wrapped in a winding sheet, tall and awful, a spear in his hand, he strode along: the sentinels flee, the thunder peels, the monk is pierced by the outstretched lance; then all is darkness, and the apparition disappears. But where the lightning struck, the monk lies as a heap of ashes.

Without being aware of it, Petra had caught fast hold of the old lady, and grasped her so tightly, that she alarmed her, and seeing Petra's increasing paleness, she exclaimed: "Why my dear child, it is only Knutsen; that is the only part he can play, he speaks so broad."--"No, no, no," said Petra, "I saw flames round about him, and the whole church shook beneath his tread!"--"Be quiet there!" was heard from several quarters; "Out with those who can't be quiet!"--"Silence in the gallery!" cried the parquet; "Silence!" replied the gallery.--Petra had crept together as if to hide herself, but she soon forgot them altogether; for see! there are the lovers again, the lightning has opened their way, they will escape! They have found each other, they embrace; Heaven protect them!

Then a tumult arises, a sound of voices and trumpets, the bridegroom is torn from her side, they are fighting for their country, he is wounded, and dying he greets his bride, ... Petra first understands what has happened, when the bride enters softly, and sees him dead! It is as if the clouds of grief would gather over a single spot, but a glance dispels them: the bride looks up from the dead man's side, and prays that she too may die! The heavens open at her glance, the lightning flashes, the bridal hall is above; let the bride in! Yes,--already she can see within; for her eyes shed a blessed peace, like that upon the mountain tops. Then the eyelids close: the battle had a higher solution, their constancy a brighter crowning; she was now with him.

Petra sat a long time still: her heart was lifted in faith, and the strength of the Highest filled her soul. She rose up, above all that was small, above fear and pain, rose with smiles to all,--were they not brothers and sisters; the evil that separates was not present, it was crushed under the thunder. They laughed at her in return, that was the girl that had been half mad at the play;--but in their smiles, she saw only a reflection of the victory she herself had gained. In this confidence, that they were smiling in participation with her joy, her face bore so radiant an expression, that they could not resist it, and they smiled her smile in return; she passed down the broad stairs between the people who made way for her on both sides, returning joy for her joy, and beauty for the beauty which beamed upon them. There are times when our souls shine forth in such resplendence, that we shed a brightness on all about us, though we ourselves cannot see. The greatest triumphal procession in the world, is this, to be led, upheld, and followed by one's own refulgent thoughts.

When, without knowing how, she arrived at home, she asked what it had all been. There were some present, who were able to understand her, and give her a satisfactory reply; and when she had got a real appreciation of what the drama was, and of what great actors had in their power, she rose and said: "There is nothing greater than this upon earth, and this I must be."

To their astonishment she put on her things and went out again; she must be alone, and in the open air. She went away from the town, and out to the adjacent promontory,--the wind was high, and the sea lashed up beneath her;--the town on both sides of the bay lay enveloped in a light mist, behind which the innumerable lights with all their endeavours could do no more than lighten the fog they could not lift.

This was the image of her soul.

The great darkness, in its damp surge beneath her feet, gave warning of an impenetrable deep; it behoved her to sink down thither, or rise in the attempt to lighten it. She asked herself why she had never before felt these thoughts, and she answered, because it was the moments only that had power over her, but then she felt that she had also power over them. She saw it now: as many moments would be given her, as there were flickering lights yonder, and she prayed God that she might perfect them all, that so His love might have kindled no light in vain.

She rose, for the wind was icy told; she had not been long away, but as she went home again, she knew whither she was going.

The next day she stood at the director's door. Hot words were heard from within; one of the voices seemed to her like the bride's of yesterday; in another key, to-day, to be sure, but still it made Petra tremble. She waited a long time, but as it would not stop, at last she knocked. "Come in," said a man's voice angrily. "Oh!" screamed a lady, and as Petra entered, she saw a flying terror in a night dress, and with dishevelled hair, disappearing through a side door. The director, a tall man with blear eyes (which he hastened to hide with a pair of gold spectacles), was pacing backwards and forwards in agitation. His long nose so ruled his face, that all the rest was there for the nose's sake, the eyes stuck out like two gun barrels behind this rampart, the mouth was a trench before it, and the forehead, a light bridge over to the forest, or barricade of felled trees.--"What is it you want?" he stopped short; "is it you that

wishes to join the chorus?" he asked hurriedly. "'The chorus,' what is that?"--"Ha! so you don't know that; what is it you want then?"--"I wish to be an actress."--"An actress indeed,--and don't know what a chorister is! But you speak the dialect?"--"'Dialect,' what is that?" "Eh! so you don't know that either, and will yet be an actress, well, well; yes, that's like the Norsemen. Dialect means, that you don't talk like we do."--"Yes, but I've been practising all the morning."--"Have you, indeed? Come, come, let me hear!" Petra took an attitude, and said with exactly the same accent as the bride of yesterday: "I greet you my love. Good morning!"--"I say, you are possessed, are you come here to make a fool of my wife!" A peal of laughter was heard in the adjoining room, the director opened the door, and without a trace of remembrance that but a moment since they had been fighting for life and death: "Here is a Norwegian hussy," he said, "caricaturing you, pray come and see her!" A lady's head with untidy, refractory black hair, dark eyes, and large mouth, peeped in and laughed. And yet Petra hastened towards her; for it must be the bride,--no, her mother, she thought as she drew nearer. She looked at the lady, and said: "I am not sure if it is you, or if it is your mother!" whereupon the director also laughed. The head had retreated, but laughed in the side room. Petra's embarrassment was clearly depicted in her face and attitude; it attracted the director's attention, he looked at her, and taking a book, said as though nothing in the world had happened: "Take this, my girl, and read, but read as you talk yourself."--She did so. "No, no, that is not right, read Norwegian,--Norwegian, I say!"--and Petra read, but the same as before. "No, I tell you, it is altogether wrong. Do you understand what I mean? Are you stupid?"--He tried her again and again, then took the book from her and gave her another: "See, that is the opposite, it is comic, read that!"--"Yes, Petra read, but with the same result till she wearied him out."--"No, no!" he cried, "for heavens sake give over,--what do you want with the stage, what the deuce is it you want to act?"--"The play I saw yesterday."--"Aha! To be sure! well, and then?"--"Yes," said she, feeling a little bashful, "I thought it was so delightful, yesterday, but I have been thinking

today it would be still more delightful if it had a good ending, and I would give it that."--"Eh, that is it? Well, to be sure! There's nothing to hinder; the author is dead. Of course, he is no longer correct, and you, who can neither speak, nor read, will improve his works;--yes, that is Norwegian!" Petra did not understand the words, she understood only that they went against her, and she began to fear. "Will you let me?" she asked softly.--"Certainly, Lord preserve us, there's nothing to hinder, be so good!--Listen," he said in a different tone, as he went close up to her, "you have no more idea of the drama than a cat; and you have no talent for either the comedy or the tragedy; I have tried you in both. Because you have a pretty face, and a fine figure, I suppose people have put it into your head that you could play much better than my wife, and so you will take the first part in my 'répertoire,' and make alterations to begin with;--yes, that is the Norwegians, they are the people that can do it."--Petra could hardly breathe, she struggled and struggled; at last she ventured to say: "Will you really not allow me?" He had been standing looking out of the window, and was certain she had gone; he now turned round in surprise, and was struck with her emotion, and the wonderful strength with which it was pourtrayed in her whole being; he looked at her a moment, then suddenly seizing the book, he said with a voice and manner as if nothing had happened before: "See, take this piece here, and read it slowly, let me hear your voice. Come now!" But she could not read, for she could not see the letters. "Don't be afraid!" At last she began, but coldly, without any spirit; he bade her read it over again with more feeling; but it was still worse, so he quietly took the book from her: "I have tried you in all ways," he said "so I have no responsibility. I assure you, my good girl, if I were to send my boots upon the stage, or I were to send you, the impression would be just the same--viz., a very remarkable one. So that must end the matter!" But as a last endeavour, Petra ventured entreatingly: "I believe though I understand it, if only I get----" "Yes, to be sure,--every fishing village understands it a great deal better than we; the Norwegian public is the most enlightened in the world."--"Come now, if you won't disappear, I

must!" She turned to the door, and burst into tears. "I say," this violent outburst had thrown a new light on the subject; "I say, I suppose it isn't you that made such a disturbance in the theatre last night?"--She turned round, fiery red; "Yes, to be sure, I know you now, Fisher Girl! I was in company with a gentleman from your town after the play, he 'knew you well.' Ha! so that is why you wanted to get on the stage; you would try your tricks there,--I understand!--Listen: My theatre is a respectable establishment, and I defy all attempts to transform it. Go! Will you go, I say!"--and Petra went, sobbing fearfully, down the steps, and out into the street. She ran crying past all the people, and a lady at mid-day, running and crying in the street created, as may be imagined, a great sensation. People stopped, the dogs ran after her, and more followed. The whirr behind her reminded her of those awful nights in the attic chamber, she remembered the faces in the air and ran faster. But the remembrance grew more vivid with every step, the noise behind her increased, and when she arrived at the house and shut the street door, reached her room and locked herself in, she threw herself down in a corner to defend herself from the faces; she struck them off with her hands, and threatened them, then sinking down exhausted, she wept more quietly,--and was saved.

The same day towards evening, she left Bergen and started for the country; she did not know where to, but she would go where she was not known. She went in a carriole, the driver boy sitting on her trunk strapped on behind. It rained fast, she sat crouched together under a great rain hat, and looked uneasily at the mountain above her, and then at the precipice below. The forest before her was a dense mass of fog, teeming with spectres; the next moment she would enter it, but the fog was parting at every step she took towards it. A mighty rumbling that grew stronger and stronger increased the feeling that she was entering upon an unknown region, where everything had its own meaning and some dark and mysterious connection, where man was only a nervous traveller, who had yet to discover whether or not he could get further. The rumbling came from several waterfalls, that in the wet weather had

grown up to battle, and now hurled themselves precipitately from rock to rock with a terrific crash. Now and then they passed over narrow bridges; she could see the water boiling and seething in the hollows below. Soon the road began to bend and wind down the mountain; here and there lay a cultivated field, and a few turf houses stood together; then again it turned up towards the forest and rumbling. She was wet through, and shivered, but still she would go further, as long as the day lasted,--further also the next day, ever deeper in, till she came to a place she dare trust herself to. Thereto He Himself would help her, the Almighty, who now led them through the darkness and the storm.

VIII.

AT THE RURAL DEAN'S.

Quite late in autumn, among the mountains in Bergen's shire, where the land is sheltered and fruitful, there are occasionally days almost like summer. On such afternoons, the cattle, even if they have already begun with the winter feeding, are again let out into the pasture; they are well fed and frisky, and when they are driven home at night, the scene is lively. Thus they came down over the mountain track, cows, sheep, and goats, bellowing, butting, and skipping, their bells merrily ringing, and were just approaching the farm as Petra was driving by. It was a beautiful day, the window panes in the long white wooden buildings glittered in the sun, and above the houses, towered the mountains, so thickly covered with firs, birch, ash, bird cherry, rowan trees, and the projecting rocks with juniper bushes, that the houses seemed quite sheltered by them. Facing the road, in front of the house, was a garden, apples, cherry, and plum trees flourished in abundance; red and black currant, and gooseberry bushes grew along the walks and fences, and above all, towered some grand old ash trees with their broad and stately crowns. The house looked like a nest half hidden among the branches, out of reach for everything but the sun. But just this

seclusion awakened a longing in Petra, and when she heard it was the deanery, she exclaimed: "I must go in here!" and pulling in the reins, she turned along the garden.

A couple of Finnish dogs rushed out upon her as she drove into the farm yard, a large square, enclosed with buildings, the cattle stall opposite the house, another wing of the house to the right, and to the left the brewery, wash house, and labourers' room. The farm yard was now full of cattle, and in the midst of them stood a lady, tall and elegant; she wore a tight fitting dress, and a little silk handkerchief over her head; round about and above her[2] were goats, white, black, brown, and parti-coloured, all with their little bells sounding in harmony; she had a name for each of her goats, and now she had something nice for them in a dish, which the milkmaid continually replenished. Upon the low step leading from the house to the farm yard, the rural dean was standing with a plate of salt, and in front of him were the cows licking the salt out of his hand and off the step where he strewed it. The dean was not a tall man, but compact, with short neck and short forehead; the bushy eyebrows lay over eyes that did not often look straight before them, but now and then cast a flashing glance aside. His thick grey hair was cut short, and stood up on all sides, it grew down over his neck nearly as much as on his head; he wore no neckerchief, but a shirt stud; in the front the shirt was open,--one could see his hairy bosom; neither was it buttoned at the wrists, so the shirt cuffs came down over the small, powerful hands, now all licked over by the cows; both hands and arms were shaggy. He glanced sharply from the side, at the stranger lady who had alighted, and made her way between the goats to where his daughter was standing. It was impossible, for the noise of the cattle, dogs, and bells, to hear what they were saying, but now both the ladies were looking at him, and with the goats around them they came towards the step. The herdsman, on a sign from the dean, began to drive the cattle away. Signe, his daughter, called out: (Petra was struck with the harmony of her voice,) "Father, here is a lady travelling, who would like to rest a day with us."--"She shall be welcome!" cried the dean in reply, gave the dish

to the lad, and went into his study, in the right wing of the house, apparently to tidy himself. Petra followed the young lady into the passage, which was more properly a hall, it was so light and broad; the driver boy was dismissed, her things carried in, and she herself shewn into a side room opposite the study, where she took off her things, and went out again into the passage, to be further shewn into the dining room.

What a large light room! Nearly the whole wall fronting the garden was windows, the middle one opened as a door to the garden. The windows were broad and high, reaching almost to the floor, and they were full of flowers, plants stood upon stands here and there in the room, and instead of curtains was interwoven ivy, hanging from two small hedges of flowers up in the frame above. As there were bushes and flowers on every side, growing up the walls, and on the greensward before her, it seemed like a conservatory in the midst of the garden; and yet one had not been a minute in the room, before the flowers were no longer seen; for the church standing by itself on a hill to the right was what one saw,--the blue waters reflecting its image, coursed sparkling on so far away between the mountains that one could not tell whether it was a lake, or an arm of the sea curving in. And then the mountains themselves! Not single, but chains of mountains, each one rearing its mighty front behind the other, as if the boundary of the world.

When Petra withdrew her eyes, everything in the room seemed hallowed by the scene without; it was pure and light,--a frame of flowers for a magnificent picture. She felt surrounded by some unseen presence, observing her deportment, yea, even her thoughts; she went round the room, without being conscious of doing so, and touched the things. Suddenly she caught sight of the life size portrait of a lady smiling down upon her from over the sofa, facing the light. She was sitting with her head a little to one side, and folded hands, her right arm rested on a book, on the back of which, in distinct letters, was inscribed: "Sabbath Hours." Her light hair and fair complexion, shed radiance, imparting a Sabbath peace to all around her. Her

smile was grave, but the gravity was affection. She seemed as though she could draw everyone to her in love; she seemed to understand all, for in everything she saw only the good. Her countenance bore traces of delicacy, perhaps this delicacy had been her strength, for there could be no one who dare abuse it. A wreath of everlastings hung above the frame; she was dead.

"That was my mother," she heard softly behind her, and she turned,--it was the daughter, who had gone out and now came in again. The whole room, seemed as it were, filled with the portrait, everything was adapted to it, and the daughter was its quiet reflection; she seemed a little more silent, a little more reserved. The mother received the glance of all, and gave hers fully in return, the daughter bent hers down, but in both there was the same peace and mildness. She had also her mother's figure, but without a trace of weakness,--on the contrary, the bright colours in her tight-fitting dress, in her apron, and little silk neckerchief fastened with a Roman pin, cast a glow of freshness over her face, and yielded a charm, which made her at once the daughter of the portrait, and the nymph of the place. As she was walking there among the mother's flowers, Petra felt a strong drawing towards her; in the presence of such a woman, and in such a place, everything good must grow;--dare she but step within! She now doubly felt her loneliness; her glance followed Signe incessantly, Signe felt it and tried to evade it, but it did not help, she felt embarrassed, and stooped down over the flowers. At last Petra discovered her impropriety, she felt ashamed, and would have apologised, but there was something in the neatly arranged hair, the fine forehead, and the dress, that bade her be cautious. She looked up at the mother; her, she could already have embraced! Was it not as if she were bidding her welcome. Dare she believe it? No one had ever looked thus at her before; it seemed to say that she knew all that had happened to the wayfarer, and would yet forgive her. Forbearance, she stood in need of, and she could not take her eyes from this benevolent glance,--she put her head to one side, like the portrait, she folded her hands like it, and almost without knowing it, she

exclaimed: "Oh let me stay here!" Signe rose and turned towards her, she could not answer for amazement. "Do let me stay here!" begged Petra again, advancing a step towards her: "It is delightful!" and her eyes filled with tears.

"I will ask my father to come," said the young lady. Petra watched her till she passed within the study door, but as soon as she was alone, she was afraid at what she had done, and she trembled when she saw the dean's astonished face at the door. He came a little better dressed than before, and with a pipe in his mouth; he held fast hold of it, taking it from his lips at every whiff, and emitting the smoke in three puffs, each with a little smack; he repeated this two or three times, as he stood before Petra in the middle of the floor, not looking at her, but as if waiting for her to speak. She dare not before this man repeat her request; he looked so austere. "You wish to stay here?" he asked, and he gave her a quick bright side glance. Her terror made her voice tremble a little: "I have no place to go to."--"Where are you from?" In a low tone she gave the town and her own name. "How did you get here?"--"I do not know, ... I am seeking ... I can pay for myself, ... I, ... Yes, I don't know," she could say no more for a minute, then she took fresh courage and continued: "I will do everything you tell me, if only I may stay here, and not have to go further ... and not have to ask any more." The daughter had followed her father in, but remained standing by the stove, where without looking up, she was fingering the dried rose leaves that lay there. The dean did not reply, one could only hear the puff of his pipe, as he looked alternately at her, Petra, and the portrait. Now the same thing may give two very different impressions: while Petra was praying that the portrait might influence him to lenience, he thought it whispered: "Protect our child; take no stranger in to her!"--He turned with a sharp side glance to Petra: "No, you cannot remain here!"

Petra turned pale, drew a deep heavy sigh looked round hesitatingly,--and then rushing into a side room, the door of which stood half open, she threw herself down beside a table, and gave full vent to her grief and disappointment! Father and

daughter looked at each other; this lack of manners,--rushing into another room without a word, and then sitting down by herself, was only a counterpart of her former proceeding,--coming in from the road, begging to stay with them, and bursting into tears when she did not get permission. The dean went after her, not to speak to her, but to shut the door. He came back quite flushed, and said in a subdued tone to the daughter, who was still standing by the stove: "Have you ever seen her equal?--Who is she? What is her object?"--The daughter did not at once reply, and when she answered it was in a still more subdued tone than the father's.--"She goes the wrong way about, but there is something very remarkable in her."--The dean paced up and down, looking towards the door; at last he stopped and whispered: "She cannot be altogether in her right mind?"--and as Signe did not answer, he came nearer and repeated more decidedly: "She must be crazy, Signe, half-witted; that is the remarkable about her."--"I don't think so;" replied Signe, "but she is certainly very unhappy," and she bent down over the dried rose leaves with which she was still toying.

The tone of the voice, as well as the movement would have been in no way striking to another; but it changed the father at once, he walked a few times up and down, looking at the portrait; at last he said, very slowly: "You mean, because she looks unhappy,--that mother would have bidden her stay?"--"Mother would not have given any answer for two or three days," whispered the daughter, bending lower over the roses. The gentlest reminder of her up there, when the daughter brought it thus before him, could make that hairy lion head as mild and gentle as a lamb's. He felt the truth at once, and stood like a school boy caught in a trick; he forgot to smoke and walk up and down, and after a long time he whispered: "Should I bid her remain a few days?"--"You have already answered her."--"Yes, but it is one thing to receive her altogether, and another to let her stay here a few days."--Signe seemed to be pondering the matter, and said at last, "Do as you think best." The dean would prove the matter yet once more, as he paced the room again, smoking hard. At last he

stopped: "Will you go in, or shall I?"--"It will certainly do most good if you go," said the daughter and looked mildly up.

He was just going to turn the door handle, when a loud peal of laughter was heard from within,--then silence and again another roar. The dean, who had turned back, went forward again, the daughter after him; for there must be something the matter with the one in there.

When the door opened, they saw her sitting just where they had left her, but with a great book open before her, over which she had thrown herself without knowing it. Her tears had trickled down on to its leaves; she observed it, and was about to dry them, when her eye caught sight of an expression of the juicy sort, which she remembered from the street days of her childhood, but which she had never thought to see in print. In her amazement, she forgot to weep, but buried herself in the book,--what an absurd book it was!--She read with open mouth, it grew worse and worse, so low, but so irresistibly amusing, that it was impossible to give up, she must read on; she read, till she forgot all else, she read away both sorrow and hunger, both time and place--with old Father Holberg, for him it was. She laughed, she roared--even now when the pastor and his daughter were standing over her, she did not observe how grave they were, she never thought of her request, but laughed and asked: "Whatever is this, whatever in the world is this?" and she turned to the title page.

Then she grew pale, looked up at them, and down again in the book at the well-known characters; there are things that strike the heart like a cannon ball, things that we believed to be hundreds of miles away, we see straight before us,--here on the first page was written: "Hans Odegaard." Blushing crimson she cried: "Is the book his,--is he coming here?" she got up.--"He has promised to do so," answered Signe,--and now Petra remembered, that there was a minister's family in Bergen's shire, whom he had met abroad.--She had travelled only in a circle, she had come

just in his path. "Is he coming directly? Perhaps he is here now?" she would at once fly further.--"No, he is ill," said Signe.--"Yes, that is true, he is ill," said Petra, painfully, and sank down.

"But tell me," exclaimed Signe, "is it possible you can be----?" "The Fisher Girl!" put in the pastor. Petra looked up entreatingly at them. "Yes, I am the Fisher Girl," she said.

But her they knew quite well; for Odegaard had talked of nothing else. "That is another matter," said the dean,--he perceived there was something wrong, needing a little friendly help;--"stay here as long as you will, we shall help you!" Petra looked up in time to see the warm look Signe gave him in thanks; this did her so much good, that she went across, and took both Signe's hands, saying, though bashfully: "As soon as we two are alone, I will tell you all!"

One hour after, Signe knew Petra's whole history, which she at once communicated to her father. On his advice, Signe wrote the same day to Odegaard, and continued to do so; as long as Petra was in their house.

When that evening Petra laid down to rest, in the soft eider down, in a warm room with crackling birch wood in the stove, and the New Testament laid between the two lights on the white toilet table,--she thanked her God, as she took the book, for all, the evil as well as the good.

As a young man, the dean with an ardent temperament and talent for oratory, had wished to study for the ministry; his parents, people of wealth, had been against it; they would have preferred to see him choose what they called an independent position; but their opposition served only to increase his zeal, and when he had graduated, he went abroad to study further. During a preliminary stay in Denmark, he used often to meet a lady, who belonged to a religious sect not sufficiently strict for him, and to whom he was therefore opposed: he sought continually to influence her, but the way in which she looked at him, thereby bringing him to silence, he

could never forget during the whole of his sojourn on the continent. When he returned, he at once visited her. They had a good deal of intercourse, and grew in intimacy, till at last they became engaged, and were soon after married. And now it was evident that each of them had their own private thoughts; he had purposed to draw her over with all her simple grace, to his gloomy teaching, and she had been so innocently certain of being able to win his power and eloquence over to the service of her church. His first most cautious attempt was met by her first most cautious:--he drew back, disappointed, mistrustful. She saw it at once, and from that day he watched for her next attempt, while she did the same for his. But neither of them tried it again, for both had become afraid: he was afraid of his own passionate nature, and she, lest by a vain attempt, she might spoil her opportunity of influencing him; for she never gave up hope,--she had made it the aim of her life. But it never came to a conflict; for where she was, such could not be; yet to his active will, his repressed emotions, he must give vent, and so it happened every time he entered the pulpit and saw her seated below. The members of his church were drawn in with him as in a whirlwind, he excited them, and soon they him. She saw it, and sought to give rest to her foreboding heart in deeds of benevolence,----and later, when she became a mother, in the daughter, on whom she lavished her tenderness, physical and mental, and bore her to her quiet hours. There she gave, there she took, there in the child's innocence, she watched over her own great child, there she held the feast of love, and from there she returned to him in his strictness, with the united mildness of a woman and a Christian;--it was impossible for him to say anything that could wound her then. He might indeed love her above all else on earth, but he grew more sorrowful, the more he became convinced that he could not help her in the matter of her salvation. With a mother's quiet right, she withdrew the child also from his religious instruction; the child's songs, the child's questions soon became a new and deep source of pain to him,--and now when his violent agitation had excited him to hardness in the pulpit, his wife only received him with the greater

mildness as they walked home together. The eyes spoke, but the mouth not a single word. And the daughter clung to his hand, and looked at him with eyes that were the mother's.

All sorts of subjects were discussed in this house, only not that which was the root of all their thoughts. But at length this strain could be born no longer; she smiled still, it is true; but only because she did not venture to weep. When the time drew near that the daughter must be prepared for confirmation, and consequently by the right of his office, he could draw her as quietly over to his instruction, as hitherto the mother had held her in hers, the anxiety rose to its height, and after the Sunday when the noting down of the candidates for confirmation was announced, the mother became ill, like we are when wearied out. She said smilingly, that she could not walk any more, and a few days later, also smilingly, that how she could not sit. Though she could not speak to the daughter she would yet have her always beside her, for she could see her. And the daughter knew what she would most like; she read to her out of The Book of Life, and sang to her the hymns of her childhood, the new and peaceful hymns of her fellow believers. It was long before the dean realised what was here preparing; but when he did realise it, he lost the threads, he could only keep his thoughts to one point,--to hear her say something to him, just a few words, but she was not able to do it; she could no longer speak. He stood at the foot of the bed, and watched, and prayed; she smiled upon him, till he fell on his knees, took the daughter's hand and laid it in the mother's, as if he said: "Here, you take her,--with you she shall ever remain!" Then she smiled as never before,--and in that smile she passed away.

After this, it was long before the dean could be led into conversation; another was appointed to perform his duties,--he himself wandered from room to room, from place to place, as though seeking something. He went about quietly; when he spoke it was in a subdued tone, and it was only by adopting the whole of this silent method, that little by little, the daughter could share his society. But now she helped

him in his search, every word of the mother's was recalled,--what she would have wished, became their guide for the future. The daughter's communion with her, that to which he himself had been a stranger, was now lived over again;--all was gone over afresh from the first hour the child could remember; the mother's hymns were sung, her prayers were prayed, the sermons she had thought most of, were read over one by one, and her explanations and observations upon them, lovingly remembered in faith. Thus roused to activity, he felt a desire to visit the place where he had found her, there, in the same manner, to follow in her footsteps. They went, and in making her life entirely his own, he partly recovered. Himself a new beginner, he took an interest in every new effort around him, the great, the small, national, political,--which gave him back much of his own young life. His powers streamed in again, and with them his longings,--now he would preach the Word so that it would prepare for life, and not alone for death!

Before he again shut himself in with his beloved work in his mountain home, he felt a desire to take an enlarged view of the world elsewhere. They therefore continued their journey further, and had now many pleasing remembrances.

Among these people lived Petra.

IX.

APPREHENSIONS.

One Friday, a few days before the Christmas of the third year, the two girls were sitting together in the evening twilight, and the dean had just come in with his pipe. The day had passed as most others during these two years; a walk began the mornings, after breakfast an hour's practising, next languages or other studies, and then a little occupation in household duties. In the afternoon, each in her own room, Signe busy to-day in writing to Odegaard, after whom Petra never enquired, even as

she never would speak of the past. Towards dusk, a sledge drive, and now they were in, to converse or sing, or later to read aloud. For this the dean always joined them. He read remarkably well, and his daughter not less so; Petra learnt the style of both, and especially their pronunciation. The tone of Signe's voice and accent was so pleasing to her, that it rang in her ears when she was alone. Petra held Signe in such high estimation, that the fourth part a man would have taken for ardent love; she often made Signe blush. By the dean or Signe reading aloud every evening, (Petra was not to be persuaded to do it;) they had gone through the chief poets of Scandinavia, and besides had read many of the best works in foreign literature; the drama was preferred. Just as they were about to light the lamps this evening to begin, the kitchen maid came in and said, that there was some one outside who had a message for Petra. It proved to be a sailor from her native place; her mother had enjoined him to seek her, as he was going in that direction, he had now come seven miles out of his way, and must hasten back, as the vessel would be sailing. As Petra wanted to talk with him, she went part of the way along the road, for he was a dependable man whom she knew. The evening was rather dark, and there was no light from the windows except in the wash house, where they were having a great wash; there was no light on the road, and the road itself could scarcely be seen, till the moon rose over the mountains; but Petra went boldly on into the forest, though there were weird shadows cast among the branches. One piece of intelligence especially had enticed her to go with him: the sailor had told her that Pedro Ohlsen's mother was dead, whereupon he had sold the house, and moved up to Gunlaug, where he occupied Petra's room. This was about two years ago, yet the mother had never named a word about it. Now, however, Petra could judge who it was that had written the letters for her mother, a question she had often asked, but always in vain; for every letter concluded with these words: "and a greeting from the one that writes this letter." The sailor had it in charge to ask her, how long she was going to stay at the deanery, and what she intended to do afterwards. Petra replied to the first that

she did not know, and to the second that he must tell the mother, there was only one thing she wished in the world, and if she did not get it, she would be unhappy all her life; but just now she could not say what it was.

While Petra was talking to the sailor, the dean and Signe were sitting in the dining room, talking about her to whom they were both very much attached. Then the steward came up, and after giving in his report for the day, he asked, if either of them knew, that the young lady living with them went up and down from her room by a rope-ladder at nights. He had to repeat it three times before either of them could conceive what he meant; for he might as well have told them that she went up and down on the moonbeams. It was dark in the room, and now it became perfectly still; not even the sound of the dean's pipe. At length, with a certain dull clink in his voice, he asked: "Who has seen it?"--"I have; I was up attending to the horses, it would be about one o'clock."--"She went down by a rope ladder?"--"And up again."--Again a long silence. Petra occupied the room above, that looked on to the farm yard; she was alone there, no one except her had a room on that side of the house, so there could be no mistake who it was.--"It may have been in her sleep," said the steward about to withdraw.--"She could not make the rope-ladder in her sleep," said the dean.--"No, that was what I thought too, therefore I judged it was best to tell it to him, father; I have not mentioned it to any one else."--"Is there any one that has seen it besides you?"--"No,--but if he, father, doubts the matter, let the rope-ladder itself be the witness; if it is not there, I must have been wrong."--The dean rose up quickly. "Father!" begged Signe.--"Bring a light," said the dean in a way that did not allow of any opposition. Signe lit it herself. "Father!" she begged once more, as she gave it him.--"Yes, I am her father too, as long as she is in my house; it is my duty to look into it,"--he went before with the light, Signe and the steward after.

Everything was in order in the little room; only a whole row of books lay open on the table in front of the bed, one on the top of the other. "Does she read at night?"--"I

don't know, but she never puts her light out BEFORE one o'clock." The dean and Signe looked at each other,--they separated at the deanery about ten or half-past, and they re-assembled again in the morning at six or seven.--"Do YOU know anything about it?" Signe did not reply. But the steward who was down on his knees in the corner, seeking, answered from there: "She certainly is not alone."--"What is that you are saying?"--"No, there is always some one with her, talking to her; they often speak very loud; I have heard her both plead for herself and threaten. She must be in the hand of some evil power, poor thing!" Signe turned away; the dean had grown deathly pale.--"And here is the ladder," said the steward, he pulled it out, and got up. Two clothes lines were fastened together by a third, tied in a hard knot, then carried across and fastened in a knot about half a foot below, then back, and so on till the ladder was long enough. They examined it carefully.--"Was she long away?" asked the dean.--The steward looked at him, "How, away?"--"Was she long away, when she came down?"--Signe stood and shivered from fear and cold.--"She did not go anywhere, she went up again."--"Up again? Then who went away?"--Signe turned, and burst into tears. "There was not any one with her that evening, it was yesterday."--"Then there was no one on the ladder except her?"--"No."--"And she went down and up again directly?"--"Yes."

"She has been proving it then," said the dean, and drew a long breath as if relieved.--"Yes, before she let any one else go," added the steward. The dean looked at him: "Then do you mean this is not the first she has made?"--"No, otherwise how could people have got up to her?"--"Have you known a long time that some one came to her?"--"Not before this winter, when she began to burn her lamp at night. It never struck me before to go down there."--"Then you have known it the whole winter," said the dean severely; "why have you not told me before?"--"I thought it was some one belonging to the house that was with her;--but when I saw her on the ladder last night, it struck me it might be some one else. If it had struck me before, I should have mentioned it before."--"Yes,--it is clear enough she has deceived us

all!" Signe looked up imploringly. "She should not have a room so far away from the others," observed the steward, rolling up the ladder. "She should not have a room beneath my roof," said the dean, and went; the others followed.

When he had gone down, and set the light away from him on the table, Signe came and threw herself into his arms,----"Yes, my child, this is a fearful disappointment." Shortly after, Signe was sitting in the sofa corner, with a pocket handkerchief before her eyes, the dean had lit his pipe, and walked quickly up and down. Suddenly there was a scream from the kitchen, and they heard the servants run up stairs, and rush along the passages overhead; they both hastened out: Petra's room was on fire! A spark must have fallen from the light in the corner, for the fire had sprung from there, and in a moment blazed along the wall-paper, and reached the wood work of the window, when it had been observed by some one passing by, who had run into the wash house and told them about it. The fire was soon put out; but in the country, where everything has its even routine from one year's end to another, any sudden interruption causes great excitement. The fire is their worst, most dangerous enemy, never out of their thoughts, and when he thus comes in the night, thrusting his head up over the precipice, and licking greedily after his prey, they tremble, and do not regain composure for weeks, some not even for life.

When after this, the dean and his daughter again stood together in the dining room, the lamps having been lit, they both felt there was something ominous in the thought, that Petra's room had thus been destroyed, and all traces of her burnt out. At the same moment, they heard her clear voice, calling and questioning; she sprang up and down stairs, ran from the attic to the passage, from the passage to the kitchen, and finally came rushing in with her things on: "Heavens! my room is burnt!" No one answered, and in the same breath, she asked: "Who has been there? When did it happen? How did the fire break out?" The dean now replied, that it was they who had been there: they had been looking for something; he gave her a penetrating look. But Petra did not give the slightest sign of finding this anything wonderful, nor did

she betray any fear for what they could have found. She did not even suspect anything wrong when Signe did not look up from the sofa; she attributed it to her fright from the fire, and she never ceased asking, how it had been discovered, put out, who had got there first, &c., and as she got no answer quickly, she ran out as she had come in. But she soon came rushing in again, having partly taken off her things, and told them how she had seen the light herself, and run so fearfully, but was so glad now to find it was no worse. So saying, she took off the rest of her things, carried them out, and coming in again, she seated herself at the table, talking incessantly, of what this and that one had said and done, the whole place indeed was turned upside down, and it was very amusing. As the others continued silent, she expressed her regret that it had spoilt the evening for them; for she had been looking forward with so much pleasure to "Romeo and Juliet," which they were then reading aloud; she was going to ask Signe that very evening to read that scene over again, that she thought the finest of all: the parting of Romeo and Juliet on the balcony. In the midst of her chattering, one of the girls from the wash house came and said that they were short of clothes lines, there was one bundle missing. Petra grew suddenly red and got up; "I know where it is, I will go for it," she went a few steps, then remembering the fire, she stopped: "Goodness, it will be burnt! it was in my room!" Signe had turned towards her, the dean took a full view from the side: "What do you do with clothes lines?" He breathed heavily, he could scarcely speak. Petra looked at him, his fearfully grave look made her half afraid, but the next moment it made her laugh, she strove a minute against it, but looking at him again, she burst into such a hearty fit of laughter that she could not stop;--there was no more of a troubled conscience in it, than in a rippling brook. Signe heard it in her voice and sprang up from the sofa: "What is it, what is it?"--Petra turned round, laughed and hopped about, she ran to the door, but Signe stopped the way: "What is it, Petra, tell me?" Petra ran behind her as if to hide, but continued to laugh immoderately. No, guilt does not behave so, now the dean could see that too;--he who stood on the point of

bursting into a rage, hopped down into laughter instead, and Signe after him; nothing in the world is more catching than laughter, and especially laughter that is entirely incomprehensible. The vain attempts which now the dean, now Signe made to get to know what they were laughing at, only made them laugh the more; the maid, who was standing waiting, at last could resist it no longer, and began to roar; she had that extraordinary laughter as though it came from a pit with hoisting and heaving; she felt, herself, that it did not suit to fine furniture and people, so she hastened to the door to give free vent to it in the kitchen. Of course she took the contagion with her there; soon a whole volley of laughter poured in from the kitchen, where they knew still less what they were laughing at, and this made the laughter in the dining room break out anew.

When at last they were almost done up, Signe made a last attempt to get to know the cause: "Now you must tell me!" she exclaimed, holding Petra's hands.--"No, not for the world!"--"Yes, but I know what it is!" she said: "and my father knows as well!" Petra screamed and slipped loose, but on reaching the door, Signe caught her again, then Petra turned to free herself, she would get away at any price, she laughed while she struggled, but there were tears in her eyes; then Signe left loose,--Petra ran, and Signe after her, till they reached the room of the latter. There they embraced each other, "Mercy! do you really know?" whispered Petra.--"Yes, we were up in your room with the steward, who had seen you,--and we found the ladder!"--Fresh screams, and fresh flight, but this time only to the sofa corner, where she hid herself Signe came, and bending over her, she whispered in her ear, all about their journey of discovery, with its pleasing consequences;--that which an hour ago had cost her both tears and fears, seemed now so amusing that she told it with humour! Petra listened and stopped her ears, looked up and hid herself by turns. When Signe had finished, and they were sitting together in the darkness, Petra whispered: "Do you know how it is? It is impossible to sleep at ten o'clock, when we go to our rooms, that which we have read has far too much power over me. So I learn it by heart, all

the best pieces,--I know several scenes, and read them aloud to myself. When we came to Romeo and Juliet, it seemed the most delightful thing upon earth; I grew wild, I must try that with the rope ladder, I had never thought anyone could go up and down on a rope ladder.... I got hold of some ropes,--and there that fellow was standing below and watching me!--Yes, but it is nothing to laugh at, Signe, it is so boyish, I shall never be anything else than a boy,--and now to-morrow I shall be a laughing stock for the whole neighbourhood." But Signe, who had begun to laugh again, kissed her, gave her a clap, and ran out, saying: "No, I must tell father!"--"Are you mad, Signe!"--and away they rushed. The dean was just coming out to see what had become of them, and they nearly knocked him over; Signe told him the whole story.

After tea where she was duly teased by the dean, Petra, by way of punishment, was to recite what she knew by heart. It proved to be a fact that she knew all the most celebrated scenes and not only one part in them, but all. She recited as if she were reading, now and then she was almost on fire, but then she would suddenly check herself. The dean had hardly observed this, before he would have a little more expression, but it only made her more shy. The recitation continued several hours; she knew the comic scenes as well as the tragic, the playful as well as the serious;--her memory both astonished and amused them, she laughed, and told them only to try her.

"I wish the poor actors had but the eighth part of the memory you have!" said Signe.--"God preserve her from ever being an actress," said the dean, at once becoming earnest.--"But father, you don't suppose Petra has any idea of such a thing?" said Signe laughing: "I have always observed that any one educated from youth up in the poetry of his language, has no longing at all to go upon the stage, while those who do not know much about poetry till they are grown up, revel in the thought of it, it is the longing of poetry, a longing all at once awakened in them that impels them."--"That is very true; it is not often that a really educated person will go

upon the stage."--"And still more seldom one poetically educated," said Signe--"Yes, if it occurs there is a want in the character, which allows vanity and levity to get the upper hand. In my travels abroad, and also when studying, I became acquainted with many actors, but I have never known, and I have never heard of any one knowing an actor, who led a really Christian life. I have seen that they have felt themselves called, but there is something restless and unsatisfying in their occupation; they have found it impossible to collect themselves--even long after they have left it. If I have spoken with them about it, they have admitted and lamented it, but yet they have at once added: 'But we may console ourselves with the thought that we are not worse than so many others.' But this is what I call poor consolation. A life that does not in any way build up our spiritual manhood, is a sinful life. The Lord help them, and may He keep pure hearts away from it!"

The next day, Saturday, the dean as usual was up before seven, went his morning round among the labourers, and then going further, he returned in daylight. As he was going past the house to the farm yard, he saw an open exercise book, or something of the sort, which must have been thrown out of Petra's window the evening before, and not found, because it was the colour of the snow. He took up the book, and carried it in with him to his study; in opening the leaves to dry them, he saw it was an old French exercise book, in which verses were now written. He never thought of reading the verses, but he caught sight of the word, "Actress," written all over,--even in the verses themselves ... He sat down to examine it.

After repeated erasures and corrections, he came at last to the following rhyme, which though not copied, could still be read:

"Come listen my love, and hear me say, The longing that fills me from day to day, An actress I'll be, and I'll picture true, To the world a woman from every view,--

How she suffers, and how she laughs, How she prays, and loves, and chaffs, How she is when she is sinful, How she is when she is peaceful,

Oh God, I pray Thee, help Thou me, To be the one that I aim to be!"

And a little below the following:

"May not I be Thy servant, Lord? Wilt Thou not Thy help afford?"

Under this, was a verse, in imitation no doubt, of a poem they had read a few months before:

"Oh, a river nymph to be,

Nymph to be,

Moonbeams shining full and free,

Full and free,

Glide along, and turn in glee,

Turn in glee,

Death to him who in will see,

In will see,

--No, that would be sin, lirum, larum, ba!--"

And after repeated corrections, marks and notes:

"Hop, sa, sa,--hop, sa, sa, I'll dance with every one, but they'll never catch me, ha! Tra, la, la,--tra, la, la, Be always number one, but keep them all afar!"

Then distinctly and clearly, the following letter:

"Dearest Henrich,

Don't you think you and I are the best in the whole comedy? It gives us a great deal of annoyance, but that is nothing; I engrasserer thee to go to the masquerade with me to-morrow night; for I have never been, and I long for some real fun; here at home, it is so quiet and lonely. Du est a great rascal, Henrich,--wherever are you keeping yourself? for here sits

Your Pernille."

Finally in large letters, written distinctly and several times over, the following verse; she might have found it somewhere, and wanted to learn it by heart:

"In my heart, an inward burning, 'Tis the Great within me yearning,-- From the hidden springs to draw,-- Loki bind in Baldur's law, Power to speak with power imbibe, High and noble thoughts describe,-- Thereto help in mercy, Thou Who the need awakens now!"

There was a great deal more, but the dean did not read it.

Then it was to be an actress that she had entered his house, and taken instruction from his daughter. It was with this secret aim, she was so eager to hear them read aloud, and then afterwards learn by heart. She had been deceiving them the whole time; even yesterday, when she seemed to be telling them everything, she was hiding something: when she seemed to laugh so innocently, she was lying.

O this secret purpose! That which the dean had so often condemned in her presence, SHE embellished with the calling of God, and dared to ask His blessing upon it! A life of appulance and frivolity, of jealousy and passion, of idleness and sensuality, of lies and growing unprincipledness, a life over which the vultures gather, as over a carcase, was that to which she longed to attach herself, and prayed God to consecrate! And it was to this life, that the dean and his daughter had helped her forward in the quiet parsonage, under the watchful eyes of the awakened church.

When Signe, bright and cheerful as the winter morning, came in to greet her father, she found the study entirely filled with tobacco smoke. This was always a sign of trouble, but especially so early in the morning. He did not speak a word to her, but gave her the book,--she saw directly it was Petra's; a shadow of the mistrust and pain of yesterday, came over her, she dared not look at it; her heart beat so violently that she was obliged to sit down. But the same word that had attracted the dean's attention, caught hers too; she must see more, so she read on. Her first feeling was one of shame--not for Petra,--but because her father had seen it too.

But she soon experienced the deep mortification, that comes when we find ourselves deceived by one we love. For a moment, the one who has been able to do it, seems greater, more ingenious, wiser than we, yea, he may even glide into the mysterious. But soon the mind is aroused in indignation; integrity is strengthened by the powers which are not secret, though they are unseen: we feel able to defy a hundred cunning devices; we DESPISE, what at first caused us mortification.

Petra had seated herself at the piano in the dining room, and now they heard her singing:

"The morning has dawned, and joy to awaken, --The forts of despondency stormed and taken,-- Over the glowing mountain tops, The host of the king of daylight drops.

'Up, up, up,' little birds of the wood, 'Up, up, up,' little children good, And up, my hope with the sun!"

And then a storm swept over the instrument, and out of it burst the following song:

"In vain you may plead, For my boat I must lead, Through the breakers rough, To the tempest tough.

And should it be proved the last push from the shore, I must venture what never I ventured before.

Not for fancy or boast Do I leave your coast;-- I must reach the deep sea, And the waves ride free.

I must e'en see the keel, as she cuts through the wave, And thus prove if my vessel knows how to behave!"

No, this was too much for the dean, he snatched the book from Signe's hand, and rushed to the door; this time she did not hold him back. He went straight to Petra, threw the book on the piano before her, turned, and strode across the room; when he came back, she had risen, and pressing the book to her heart, she looked all round with a confused expression. He stopped to give her his full mind, but his anger at the

thought that for more than two years he had been made use of by this wily girl, and especially that his warm-hearted, affectionate daughter had been duped by her, came so forcibly before him, that he did not at once find words,--and when he did find them, he felt they were too hard. After striding once more across the floor, and once more coming opposite to her, his face scarlet, he turned his back, and without a word walked into his study. When he came there, Signe was gone.

All that day they kept to their own rooms. The dean dined alone, neither of the girls appeared. Petra was in the housekeeper's room, which had been alloted to her since the fire; she sought all over for Signe to explain to her, but in vain: she could not be at home.

Petra felt this to be a decisive moment in her life. Her most secret thoughts had slipped from her, and they would try to exert an influence over them, which she could not bear. She knew best herself, that if she relinquished this object, she would be driven at the mercy of the winds. She could be light-hearted with the light-hearted, and confidential with the confidential, hopeful in everything, but it was in the strength of that secret purpose,--that some time she would be able to secure that after which her powers were yearning. To confide in any one, after that first baulking attempt at Bergen,--no, she could not do it, not even in Odegaard himself! She must be alone in it, until her aim had grown so strong, that it could bear to hear the doubts that would be breathed upon it.

But now it had happened otherwise: the dean's fiery red face looked continually down upon her scared conscience.--She must save herself!--She sought for Signe more earnestly and hurriedly in the afternoon, but still she was not to be found. The longer one whom we seek hides from us, the greater we depict the cause of separation, and thus it was, that at last she made herself believe it had been treachery against Signe, secretly to use her friendship for that which Signe thought to be a sin. The omniscient God must be her witness, that this view of her conduct had never

struck her before; she felt herself a great sinner.

Just as before at home, she now stood with the feeling of a great sin upon her conscience, of which a moment before, she had no suspicion. That that terrible experience might be repeated, augmented her vague fear to terror; she saw before her a future of unhappiness. But in proportion as her own guilt increased, Signe's image stood forth in purity and disinterested attachment.

It had grown dark, wherever Signe had been she must have got home. She ran down the passage leading to the wing where Signe's room was; the door was locked,--a sign that she was there. Her heart beat as she took hold of the handle, and begged again: "Signe, let me speak to you!--Signe, I cannot bear it!"--Not a sound; Petra bent down to listen, and knocked again: "Signe, oh Signe, you don't know how unhappy I am." No reply; long listening, still none. If one gets no answer, one doubts at last if anyone is there, even if one knows there is someone, and if it is dark, one gets afraid. "Signe,--Signe! if you are there, be merciful,--answer me,--Signe!" All was silence; a cold shiver came over her. The kitchen door opened, and quick steps were heard in the court yard below. This gave her a thought, she would go out herself, get up on the ledge on the wall of the wing, and go round the whole building to get to the other side where it was very high. She would see Signe.

It was a bright starlight night, the mountains stood in sharp outline, the snow sparkled, the dark footpaths only increased the sharpness of the light; from the road the sledge bells were sounding, she felt inspirited, and sprang up on the ledge. She tried to hold fast by the outside boarding of the house, but she lost her balance and fell. Then she rolled an empty cask against the wall and got up from it on to the ledge. By moving hands and feet together, she could get about half a foot at a time; it required a strong hand to keep fast; she could not get well hold for the boards were scarcely an inch thick. She was afraid lest any one should see her, for they would naturally connect it with the rope ladder. If she could but get away from this side

that faced the farm, and out on to the cross wall; but when at last she did get there, a new danger awaited her; there was nothing before the windows, and she had to stoop down, in great fear of falling, every time she passed them. The long wall was very high, but there was a gooseberry hedge to receive her if she fell; she was not afraid. Her fingers tingled, her muscles quivered, but on she went. A few steps more and she would reach the window. There was no light in Signe's room, and the blind was not drawn down; the moon was shining full in, so she would be able to see into the farthest corners. This gave her fresh courage, she reached the window ledge, and at last could get a full hold and rest; as she got near, her heart began to beat so that it almost took her breath, but as it only grew worse by waiting, she must make haste--so she suddenly leaned right against the window. A sharp cry answered from the room. Signe had been sitting in the sofa corner, she sprang on to the floor, and with both arms warding off the fearful apparition, she rushed out of the room.

In a moment Petra realised what her unfortunate freak had done;--this figure against the window, this thoughtless repulsive boldness--; her image henceforth would be a constant terror to Signe; she lost consciousness, and fell with a piercing shriek.

The people in the house had run out on hearing Signe's scream, but found nothing,--another scream,--the whole farm was astir; they sought, they called, but in vain; it was purely accidental that the dean came to look out of the window in Signe's room, and in the moonlight saw Petra buried in the bushes. It was with great difficulty they could get her extricated and carried up; she was taken into Signe's room, as the housekeeper's was cold, she was undressed and put to bed. Some of them bathed her hands and neck, while others made the room warm, light and comfortable. When she came to herself, and looked about, she begged to be left alone.

The quiet comfort of the room, the fine white dimity that draped the window, dressing table, chairs and bed, reminded her at once of Signe. She thought of her

pure loveliness, her mild voice that flowed milk white, her delicate feeling for the thoughts of others, her gentle benevolence. She had shut herself out from all this; she must soon leave the room, and probably the house. And where to then? She could not expect a third time to be taken up from the highway, and if she could, she would not; for it would end only in the same way. No human being could have confidence in her; whatever the cause, she felt that it was so. She had not got a step further, she never could get further; for without the confidence of her fellow creatures, she could not succeed. How she prayed, how she wept! She fell back and wrung her hands in an agony of mind, till she was fairly exhausted and slept.

In her sleep, everything became snow white, and by-and-by lofty; she had never before seen so high and so brilliant a glitter of millions of stars.

X.

IS MUSIC LAWFUL?

On awaking she was still in the skies. The thoughts that day poured in upon her would follow, but were caught and carried away by something which filled the whole air,--it was the Sabbath bells. She sprang up and dressed herself, got something to eat in the breakfast room, wrapped herself warmly up, and hastened away;--never before had she been so thirsty for the Word of God!

When she arrived, they had just begun, and the door was shut. The dean was standing in front of the altar, she waited by the door till he had concluded, and the assistant had removed his gown; she then went up to the so-called bishop's pew, that stood in the choir, hung with curtains. The special pew for the minister's family was higher up; but if there was any one who felt a desire for seclusion, they retired to the bishop's pew. As Petra reached it, and glided in, she saw Signe seated at the farthest corner. She retreated a step out, but just then the dean turned to go from the altar to

the vestry; she hastened back into the pew, and sat as near the door as possible; Signe had put down her veil. This grieved Petra. She looked over the congregation, crowded together in the high wooden pews, the men on the right hand, the women on the left; their breath lay above them like mist in the air; the ice was inches thick upon the windows, the rudely carved wooden images, the heavy drawling singing, the people muffled up,--it was all in unison, harsh and distant,--she thought of the impression nature made upon her that afternoon she left Bergen; here she was also only a timid wayfarer.

The dean ascended the pulpit, he too looked severe. His prayer was: "Lead us not into temptation." We knew that the talents God had given us, contained in themselves the elements of temptation; but He would be merciful and not suffer us to be tempted above that we were able to bear, for this we should always remember to pray;--for only by laying our talents at His feet, could they be of any real service to us. The minister enlarged upon the theme, setting forth our double duty--on the one hand to work out our life's calling according to our talents and position, and on the other to develope the spiritual life in ourselves, and in those committed to our care. One must be careful in the choice of a vocation, for there may be a vocation sinful in itself, and there may be one that would become so for us,--either because it did not suit us, or because it suited our lusts and passions. Again: as surely as everyone should choose a vocation according to his talents, so truly may a choice both right and good in itself, become a snare to us, if we allow it to take up all our time and thoughts. Our spiritual life must not be neglected any more than our duty as parents to our children. We must be collected in ourselves, that the Holy Spirit may have its constant work in us; we must plant and guard the good seeds of Christian life in our children. There is no duty, no pretext, that can liberate us from this, though the opportunities may vary. And now he went further--into THEIR calling that sat there, their houses, their conduct, their opinions. Then he drew examples from other conditions and nobler occupations, that cast their side rays down upon us.

From the moment the dean waxed warm in the pulpit, he was an entirely new man to those who knew him only in daily life. Even in appearance, he was changed; his reserved and powerful face had opened, revealing the play of thought within; his glance was full, and he looked earnestly as he set forth the glad tidings of salvation. The shaggy head stretched itself up like a lion. His voice rolled in thunder, or struck in short earnest variations, sometimes falling to a gentle tone, but only again to take new heights. Indeed he could never speak except in a great room, and with eternity over his thoughts; for his voice had no harmony till it rose, his countenance no clearness, his thoughts no striking perspicuity, till they burned with enthusiasm. Not that the material was first found then, no, if affliction had enriched his soul, reflection had done so too; he was a diligent worker. But he was not adapted to general conversation, he must have it to himself, at all events he must be able to inflect his voice. To open a discussion with him, was almost like attacking a defenceless man, but dangerous nevertheless; for his convictions were quickly expressed and with such force that reasons were left in the back ground; if at last he was pressed to give them, one of two things happened, either he completely overset the opposing party, or he became suddenly silent, because he was afraid of himself. No one could more easily be brought to silence than this powerful, eloquent man.

Petra had trembled as soon as the dean began his prayer; she felt whereto it tended. The further he got in his sermon, the more she felt he was true to himself; she crept together, and she saw Signe do the same. But he proceeded unrelentingly; the lion was out after his prey, she felt herself pursued from all quarters, shut in, and captured;--but that which was seized so vigourously was gently held in the hand of mercy. It was as if without a word of condemnation, she was simply folded in the embrace of Divine love. And there she prayed and wept; Signe did the same,--and she loved her for it!

As the dean descended from the pulpit, to go past into the vestry, the reflection of his communion with the Most High still overspread his countenance. His gaze fell

directly and inquiringly upon Petra; and as she looked right up to meet it, a ray of mildness shone forth: he glanced quickly into the corner at his daughter as he passed on.

Signe rose soon after; her veil was down, so Petra did not venture to go with her; she therefore waited longer. But at dinner they all three met together; the dean spoke a little, but Signe was reserved. If the dean--who was evidently about to bring the recent events into conversation,--gave the slightest allusion to it, Signe turned his remarks in a shy delicate way, reminding him at once of her mother;--he became silent, and by degrees sorrowful.

There is nothing more painful than an unsuccessful attempt at reconciliation. They rose without being able to look at each other, to return thanks for the meal. In the dining room it became at last so oppressive, that all three would willingly have left the room, but no one wished to go first. Petra for her part, felt that if she went, it would be for ever. She could not see Signe again, if she might not love her, she could not bear to see the dean sorrowful for her sake. But if she was to go away, she must go without taking leave; for how could she take leave of these people? The mere thought of it agitated her so, that she could with the greatest difficulty suppress it.

An oppressive silence like this, when each is waiting for the other, becomes more insupportable every moment. We cannot move, because we feel it will be noticed, every sigh is heard, and if we are quite still it is heard too, for it is heard as harshness. We are kept in suspense because no one says anything, and we tremble lest any one should begin.--They all felt this to be a moment that would never return.--The walls that we build up between each other rise higher, our own guilt and that of the others increases with every breath; now we are in desperation, now in wroth; for the one that behaves so to us is unmerciful, wicked, we don't tolerate THAT, we don't forgive THAT! Petra could not bear it longer, she must either

escape or scream.

But just then sledge bells were heard on the road, a man with a wolf skin coat dashed by, and turned in at the farm.--All breathed easier, and listened for the liberation. They heard the stranger in the hall, he put off his travelling coat and boots, and talked with the servant who assisted him; the dean rose to meet him, but turned so as not to leave the two girls alone,--they heard the stranger talking again, and this time nearer, so that his voice made all three look up, and Petra rose, fixing her eyes on the door,--there was a knock,--"Come in!" said the dean in an agitated tone; a tall gentleman with a light complexion and spectacles appeared in the doorway, Petra gave a scream, and fainted--it was Odegaard. He was expected at the deanery at Christmas, although no one had told Petra, but that he should come just at this juncture, must have been in the ordering of Providence; this was felt at once, and by them all.

When Petra recovered consciousness, he was standing beside her, and held her hand. He continued to hold it, but said nothing, nor did she; she was powerless even to rise. But while she continued looking at him, two tears rolled down her cheeks. He was very pale, but quite calm and kind; he withdrew his hand, and walked across the floor; then he went to Signe, who had crouched down among her mother's flowers in the furthest window.

Petra longed to be alone, and so withdrew. Domestic matters required Signe's attention, so the dean and Odegaard repaired to the study, to take a glass of wine, of which the traveller stood in need. Here he was briefly told the events of the last few days, it made him very thoughtful but he said nothing. They were interrupted in a singular way.

Two women and three men came past the windows, following one after the other; as soon as the dean caught sight of them, he sprang up: "There they are again!--now for a trial of patience."--In they came, first the women, then the men, slowly, silently.

They placed themselves along the wall under the book shelves, opposite the sofa where Odegaard was seated. The dean set chairs, and brought others from the next room; they all took seats with the exception of a young man in a modern suit who declined, and leaned against the door post, not without a defiant expression and with both hands in his pockets.

After a long silence, during which the dean filled his pipe, and Odegaard who did not smoke surveyed the visitors, the conversation was at length opened by a pale light-haired woman of about forty. Her forehead was rather narrow, her eyes large, but shy; they did not know exactly which way to turn. "The father gave an excellent sermon to-day," she said, "it touched upon what we were just thinking about;--for up at Oygarene we have been talking much about temptation lately."--She sighed; a man with a small face and large forehead sighed also: "'Take away mine eyes from beholding vanity, O Lord, and quicken thou me in thy way.'" Then Else, she who had first spoken, sighed again and said: "Lord, wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to Thy word."--It seemed rather strange, for she was no longer young. But a middle aged man who sat with his head to one side, rocking backwards and forwards, his eyelids never really lifted, said as if half asleep:

"Temptation, Satan's fiery dart, None is exempt from sharing--

Who taketh part in Jesu's death,

The name of Christ thus bearing."

The dean knew them too well not to be aware that this was only the introduction, so he waited as if nothing had been said, although there was again a long silence with repeated sighs.

A little woman, who became still less by stooping, and was enveloped in such a manifold number of shawls that she looked like a parcel,--her face almost lost,--now began to move uneasily in her chair, and at last a "hm, hm!" was heard. The

light-haired woman was at once frightened up, and said: "There is an end to all music and dancing in Oygarene now;----but----" She stopped again, whereupon Lars, he with the great forehead and the short face, continued:--"But there is one man, Hans the musician, who WILL NOT give it up."--While Lars was thinking of the rest, the young man came out with it: "Because he knows that the dean has an instrument to which they both dance and sing at the deanery here."--"It certainly cannot be greater sin for him than it is for the dean," said Lars.--"And the music must be a temptation at the deanery too," said Else cautiously, as if to help the matter forward. But the young man added more strongly: "It is a stumbling block to the young, as it is written: 'And whosoever shall offend one of these little ones, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea.'" And Lars continued: "We request therefore that you will send away the instrument, or burn it up, that it may cease to be a stumbling block--" "To your parishioners," added the young man. The dean smoked vigorously, and at last with an evident struggle for self command, he said: "To me music is not a temptation, it is refreshing and elevating. Now you know that that which can make our spirits free, makes us better able to receive and understand high things; therefore I believe most assuredly that music is of service to me."--"And I know there are pastors," said the young man, "who following the words of Paul, will nevertheless give it up for the sake of their parishioners."--"It may be that I understood his words so once," replied the dean, "but I do not now. One may well give up a custom or a pleasure; but one must with reluctance make oneself narrow-minded or foolish with those that are such. I should not be acting wrongly towards myself only, but also towards those to whom I should be a guide; for I should be giving an example against my convictions." It was seldom that the dean gave so long an explanation out of the pulpit. He added: "I will neither send away my piano, nor burn it; I will hear it often for I often feel the need of it,--and I wish that in all innocence you also could now and then refresh your spirits by song, and music and dancing; for I believe these

things to be right and proper."

The young man bent his head to one side: "Twi!" spat he.

The dean's face grew scarlet, and deep silence ensued. Then the man rocking, with a loud voice struck in:

"O Lord, my God, I can testify,

His cross in patience bearing,

With poor and rich, with women and men,

'Tis a cause of anxious wearing;

For flesh and blood as frail and weak,

We all alike are sharing.----"

Then Lars said in a mild tone: "So you say that music and singing and dancing are right, do you? then it is right to rouse Satan through the senses; hm!--so that is what our pastor says; very well then, we know it now!--that all these things connected with idleness and sensuality are elevating and helpful, ... that that which is a temptation is right!" But now Odegaard,--who saw by the dean's face that things were going wrong,--hastened to interpose: "Tell me, my good man, what there is, that is NOT a temptation?"

All looked at him from whom these pointed and terse words came. The question was in itself so unexpected, that Lars could not at once tell what to reply; nor could the others. Then it sounded up as from a well, or out of a cellar: "Labour is not."--The voice came from the bundle of shawls, it was Randi, who spoke for the first time. An exulting smile came over Lars' face, the light-haired woman looked at her with a satisfied air, even the young man leaning against the door post for a moment lost the sneering curl of his lip. Odegaard understood that this was the head, although it was not to be seen. He therefore turned himself to her: "What can that labour be, that is without temptation?" She would not answer this, but the young man replied: "The

curse says: 'In the sweat of thy brow, shalt thou eat thy bread;' labour then that brings us toil and trouble." "And nothing but toil and trouble? No profit for example?"--To this neither would he reply; but the short face felt a calling: "Yes, as much profit as one can get!"--"Then there must be temptation in work also, temptation to too much gain." In this strait, succour came again from the depths: "Then the gain is the temptation and not the work."--"Well, but how is it when the work is carried to excess for the sake of the gain?" She crept in again; but Lars went on: "What do you mean by the work being carried to excess?"--"Why, when it makes you like animals and binds you in thraldom."--"Thraldom it has to be!" said the advocate of the toil.--"But can it as thraldom lead to God?"--"Labour IS the worship of God!" shouted Lars.--"Dare you say that of ALL your labour?" Lars was silent. "No, be reasonable and admit that for the sake of gain, labour may be carried to excess, as if we lived only for it. Therefore labour also has its temptation."--"Yes, there is temptation in everything, children,--there is temptation in everything!" said the dean as he rose, and put out his pipe as if in conclusion! Sighs issued from the bundle of shawls, but no reply.

"Listen," began Odegaard again,--and the dean filled himself a new pipe--"now if labour yields fruit, i.e. profit, then we have certainly liberty to enjoy that fruit? If it should become riches, have we then liberty to enjoy these riches?"--This set them thinking, they looked from one to the other. "I shall answer, while you are thinking," said he; "God must have permitted us to try to make a blessing of his curse, for HE HIMSELF led the patriarchs, led His people to the enjoyment of riches."--"The apostles were to possess nothing," exclaimed the young man triumphantly.--"Yes, that is true; for God would place them beyond and above all human conditions, that they should look only to Him;--they were called!"--"We are all called!"--"But not in the same way;--are YOU called to be an apostle?"--The young man turned deadly pale, his eyes retreated under the wall of forehead above them: he must have his reasons for taking it so to heart.

"But the rich must also work," observed Lars; for work is God's command.--"Certainly he must, although his aim and method may be different, each one has his own task. But tell me: shall a man be ALWAYS at work?"--"He must also pray!" chimed in Else, and folded her hands, as if she remembered that she had too long neglected it.--"Then whenever a man is not working; he must pray? Is any man able to do this? What kind of prayer would it be, and what kind of work? Shall he not also rest?"--"We must rest only when we can do no more; for then we shall not be tempted by evil thoughts,--ah! then we shall not be tempted!" said Else again,--and Erik joined in:

"If ye are weary seek and find

In Jesu's name a peaceful mind,

How sweet is rest!

There comes a time when also ye

To the last resting place will flee,

An earthy nest!----"

"Be quiet, Erik, and listen to this," said the dean. And Odegaard knitted his eyebrows: "See here: labour has its fruit, and requires its rest: and it is my opinion respecting society, music, singing, and the rest, that they are not only the sweet fruit of our labours, but they also give rest and strength to the soul."

Here there was restlessness in the camp; all looked at Randi; she rocked and rocked, and at last it sounded slowly and quietly: "Worldly song, and music and dancing, afford no rest, for such excite the lust and desires of the flesh. THAT certainly cannot be the fruit of labour, which wastes and enervates."--"Ah! such things are full of temptation!" said Else with a sigh. This put Erik in mind of the verse of a hymn:--

"We see with shame and sorrow, From virtue fain to borrow The vices that abound Increasingly are found; They craftily ensnare And with a pompous air----"

"Be quiet Erik!" said the dean; "you are only rambling."--"Oh well, that may be," said Erik--and began again:--

"If one will work upon you so With ticing words that you shall go In the broad, cursed way of sin, Be strong, permit him not to win--"

"No, do give over Erik! The hymn is nice enough, but everything in its own time."--"Yes, yes, father, that is true,--everything in its own time:--

"Oh I every minute, every hour

Is Thine, it is Thy due,

Our hearts must beat to own Thy power,

And call to prayer anew--"

"No, no, Erik, or prayer itself would lead into temptation; you might become a Catholic, and go into the monastery--"--"God forbid!" said Erik, and opened his eyes wide, then shutting them, he began:

"As earth and dust to pure gold,

Are Catholics--"

"Now Erik if you can't be quiet, you must go out with the rest of it. Where was it we left off?" But Odegaard, much to his amusement had been following Erik, and could not remember. Then it came peacefully from the shawls: "I was saying that THAT cannot give rest or be the fruit of our labours, that--"--"Now I remember: that there was temptation in,--and then Erik came and proved that there may also be temptation in prayer. Let us therefore see, what these things may lead to. Have you ever observed that cheerful men work better than the dejected? Why?"

Lars caught the drift of this: "It is religion that makes us cheerful," he said.--"Yes, when it is not desponding; but have you never seen that there is a religion that makes everything so gloomy, that the world itself is like a prison?"

Else was sighing so, that the shawls began to move, Lars also looked sharply at her,

and she gave over.--Odegaard continued: "Always the same, whether it is work, prayer, or play, makes you stupid and gloomy. You may grovel in the earth till you become an animal, pray till habit makes you a monk, and play till you are nothing better than a doll. But combine them and the mind is strengthened; work prospers, and religion becomes more cheerful."--"Then we have to be cheerful now!" said the young man, and smiled.--"Yes, and then you too would win sympathy: for it is only when we are cheerful, that we can see and admire the good in others, and only by loving others that we can love God."

As no one at once contradicted this, Odegaard made a second attempt to bring the bundle to the point; "Those things that disenthral, so that the Holy Spirit can work in us, (for in bondage He cannot work) those things that assist us, must have a blessing in them,--and that this does." The dean rose, he had again a pipe to put out.

In the silence which followed, unbroken by sighs, one could see the shawls working, and at last there issued softly: "It is written: 'Whatsoever thou doest, do all to the glory of God,'---but is worldly song, and music and dancing to the glory of God?" "Directly, no;--but may we not ask the same when we eat and sleep and dress? And yet these MUST be done. The meaning therefore can only be, that we shall do nothing that is sinful."--"Yes, but is not this sinful?"

For the first time Odegaard grew a little impatient, and he merely replied: "We see in the bible, that both singing and music and dancing were used."--"Yes, to the glory of God."--"Very well,--to the glory of God. But the reason why the Jews named GOD in everything, was because, like children, they had not learnt to make distinctions. To children, every man they do not know is 'the man,'--to the child's question, 'Where does, this come from, where that?' we answer always: 'from God'; but as men to men we name the intermediate as well, and not God the giver alone. So, for example, a beautiful song may relate to God, or lead to Him, even if His name never occurs in it; for there is much that points thither, although not directly. Our dancing,

when it is the pure healthful enjoyment of the innocent, is, even if not directly, to the praise of Him who has given us health, and loveth the child in our hearts."

"Hear that, hear that!" said the dean; he knew that he himself had long misunderstood these things, and misrepresented them to others.

All this time, Lars had been sitting and thinking, now he was ready; the corn had fallen from the high forehead, to the short peevish face; there it had been crushed and ground, and now fell out: "Then all sorts of stories, tales, and nonsense,--all the fiction and invention that they fill the books with now-a-days, are they also allowable? Is it not written: 'Every word that proceedeth out of thy mouth shall be truth?'"

"I really thank you for this. You see it is with the mind as with the house you dwell in. If it was so narrow that you could scarcely get your head in and your legs stretched out, you would be obliged to widen it. And fiction elevates the mind and enlarges it. If those ideas were falsehood that are above absolute necessity, then those which ARE absolute necessity would surely become falsehood too. They would thus press you down in your house of clay that you would never reach eternity, and yet it was just there you wished to be, and it was these very same thoughts, that in faith should bear you thitherward."--"But fiction is something that has verily never been, and so it must surely be falsehood?" said Randi thoughtfully.--"No, it has often greater truths for us than that which we see," answered Odegaard. Here they all looked at him doubtfully, and the young man threw out: "I never knew before that the story of Askeladden was truer than that which I see before my eyes."--They all tittered.--"Then tell me if you always understand that which you see before your eyes?"--"I am not learned enough for that!"--"Oh, the learned certainly understand it still less! I mean those things in daily life that give us sorrow and trouble, and that 'worry us sore,' as the saying is. Are there not such things?" He did not reply, but from the bundle it sounded earnestly:

"Yes, often."--"But if you heard a fictitious history, that resembled your own in such a way, that as you heard it, you understood your own,--would you not say of this story,--which gave you the comfort and encouragement that understanding gives--would you not say that it had greater truth for you than your own?"--"I once read a story," said Else, "that helped me so in a great sorrow, that that which had long been a trouble seemed almost a joy." It coughed from the bundle;--"Yes, that is true," she added timidly.

But the young man would not agree to this; "Can the story of Askeladden be a comfort to any one?"--"Everything has its own use. The amusing has great power, and this story proves in an amusing way, that that which the world thinks the least of may often be the best,--that everything assists him who is of good cheer, and that that man gets on, who makes up his mind to do so. Do you not think that it does many children good to remember it;--and many grown people with them?"--"But to believe in hobgoblins and trolls is surely superstitious?"--"Who said you must believe in them? They are figures of speech."--"But we are forbidden to use figures and images; for they are the wiles of the devil"--"Indeed;--where do you find that?"--"In the Bible."--Here the dean interposed: "No, that is a mistake, for the Bible itself uses imagery."--All looked at him, "It employs imagery on all sides, as the Eastern people abound in such. We ourselves use it in our churches, in wood, on canvas, in stone, and we cannot conceive of the Godhead except through imagery. And not this alone: Jesus uses figures, and did not the Lord Himself appear in varied forms, when He made Himself known unto the prophets; was it not in the form of a traveller that he came to Abraham in Mamre, and ate at his table? Now if GOD HIMSELF appears in varied forms, and uses imagery, surely man may do the same," They were about to assent, but Odegaard rose and gently tapping the dean on the shoulder: "Thank you! you have shewn most conclusively from the Bible, that the drama is allowable!"--The dean started in surprise; the smoke which he had in his mouth coursed slowly out of itself.

Odegaard went across to the bundle of shawls, and bent over to try to catch a glimpse of her face, but in vain, "Is there anything more you would like to ask," said he, "for you seem to have thought over several things?"--"Oh, the Lord help me, I do not think always right."--"Well; at first after the grace of conversion, one is so absorbed by its wonders, that other things appear useless and wrong; one is like a lover, desiring only the beloved."--"Yes, but look at the early Christians, we must still follow their example."--"No, their difficult position among the heathen is no longer ours; we have other duties; we must bring Christianity into the life that now is."--"But there is so much in the Old Testament against the whole spirit of what you say," said the young man, for the first time without bitterness.--"Yes, but those commands are now dead, they are 'done away,' as Paul says: 'We are the ministers of the New Testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit':--again: 'Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.' And:----'All things are needful unto me,' says Paul further, 'but,' he adds, 'all things are not expedient.'--Now we are fortunate in having a man's life before us, that shows us what Paul meant. That is Luther's. Of course you believe that Luther was a good enlightened Christian?" Yes, they believed that.--"Luther's religion was cheerful, IT was the religion of the new testament. His idea of a gloomy faith was, that the devil was always on the watch behind it; and as for fear of temptation, those that fear the least are the least tempted. He used all the powers God had given, the powers of enjoyment too. Shall I give you a few examples? The pious Melancthon once sat so closely at a defence of the true doctrines, that he did not take time to eat; Luther snatched the pen from his hand: 'One does not serve God by work alone,' said he, 'but also in rest and quietness; therefore God gave us the third commandment and instituted the Sabbath.'--Again, Luther used figures of speech, the facetious as well as the serious, and he was full of good, often merry ideas. He also translated some excellent old popular tales into his mother tongue, and said in the preface, that next to the Bible, he scarcely knew any better admonitions than these. He played the lute, as perhaps you may know, and

sang with his children and friends,--not psalms only, no, but lively old songs too; he was fond of social games, played at chess, let the young people dance at his house; he desired only that all should be modestly and well conducted.--A simple old disciple of Luther's, pastor Johan Mathesius wrote this down, and gave it to his parishioners from the pulpit. He prayed that it might be a guide to them,--and let us pray for the same."

The dean rose: "Dear friends, now we will conclude for to day." All rose up. "Many words have been spoken for our edification; may God grant His grace upon the seed sown! Dear friends, your homes are in remote parts; you live high up, where the frost more often cuts down the corn than the sickle. Such desolate mountain places ought not to be cultivated, and ought now to be left to tradition, and the grazing cattle. Spiritual life can scarcely flourish up there, it becomes gloomy like the surrounding vegetation. Life is overshadowed by prejudice,--as by the mountains under which they grow up. The Lord gather, the Lord enlighten!--I thank you for this day my friends, it has been a day of enlightenment for me also." He shook hands with each of them, and even the young man gave his cordially, yet without raising his eyes.

"You go over the mountain,--when will you reach home?" asked the dean when they were ready to go.--"Oh, to-night sometime," said Lars; "a good deal of snow has fallen now, and where it has blown off, there are ice-banks."--"Well, my friends, it is worthy of all honour to come to church under such difficulties.--I trust you will get home safely now!" Erik answered in a low tone:

"Is God for me, whate'er there is

That will against me fall,

I can with prayer, and joyfully,

Tread under foot it all!"

"That is true, Erik, this time you have hit the mark!"--"Yes, but wait a moment," said

Odegaard just as they were going; "it is not strange that you do not know me;--but I should have relations up at Odegardene." They all turned to him, even the dean, who had known, it is true, but quite forgotten it. "My name is Hans Odegaard, son of Pastor Knud Hansen Odegaard, who once left you, long ago, with his knapsack on his back."--Then it sounded from the shawls: "Goodness,--that is my brother, that."--

They had all gathered round him, but no one was able to say anything. At last Odegaard asked: "Then it was with you I was staying when I was once up there with my father?"--"Yes, it was with me."--"And a little while with me," said Lars; "your father is my cousin."--But Randi said sorrowfully: "So this is little Hans;--yes, time goes."--"How is Else?" asked Odegaard.--"This is Else," said Randi, pointing to the fair-haired woman.--"Are YOU Else!" he exclaimed; "you were in trouble about a love affair then; you wanted to have the musician; did you get him?" No one replied. Although it was beginning to darken, he could see that Else turned very red, and the men looked either away or down--with the exception of the young man, who looked fixedly at Else. Odegaard saw that he had put an unfortunate question, the dean came to his assistance, "No, Hans the musician is unmarried; Else married Lars' son, but now she is free again, she is a widow."--Again she blushed scarlet, the young man saw it, and smiled haughtily.

Then Randi said: "Well, I suppose you have travelled far? you have learnt a good deal I can hear."--"Yes, hitherto I have been either reading or travelling; but now I mean to settle down to work."--"Well, well; that is the way:--some go out and get light and wisdom; others remain at home." And Lars added: "It is often hard to make a living at home; if we help one forward, whom we hope may be of service to us, he goes and leaves us."--"There are different callings; each must follow his own," said the dean.--"And the Lord sums up our work," said Odegaard; "my father's labours will yet tend hither again, if God will."--"Well, I suppose they will;" said Randi sadly; "but it is often hard to wait."

They departed; the dean placed himself in one window, and Odegaard in the other to look after them, as they went over the mountain; the young man went last. Odegaard learnt that he was from the town, where he had begun with several things, but had always some misunderstanding with the people. He thought himself called to be something great, an apostle in sooth; but strangely enough he remained up at the hamlet of Odegaard,--some thought from love to Else. He was a passionate soul, who had passed through many disappointments, and had many more to come.

They were now to be seen on the mountain; the roof of the barn hid them no longer. They laboured on, the trees hid them, they came forth again, ever higher and higher. There was no track in the deep snow, the trees were the way-marks in the waste, and far away to the side the snow mountains indicated the direction of their home.

In from the dining room sounded a lively prelude, and then:

"My song I give to the spring, Though she scarce is on the wing, My song I give to the spring, As longing on longing laid. So the two unite their aid To lure and tice the sun, That old winter overcome, May slip a choir of brooks;-- Then with their merry looks They'll chase him out of the air With the perfume of flowers rare,-- My song I give to the spring."

XI.

RECONCILIATION.

From that day the dean was very little with his family; for one thing, he was occupied with Christmas, and for another, he had not arrived at any conclusion, whether or not the drama was lawful for the Christian; if Petra but showed herself, he fell into a revery.

While the dean therefore was sitting in his study either with his sermons or some work on Christian ethics before him, Odegaard was with the ladies, whom he was

constantly comparing. Petra was versatile, never alike; he who would follow her, must study as in a book. Signe, on the contrary, was so winning in her unvarying cordiality, her movements were never unexpected; they were the reflection of her being. Petra's voice had all colours, sharp and mild, and every intermediate grade. Signe's possessed a peculiar harmony, but was not changing--except to the father, who understood to distinguish its tones. Petra was with one at a time; if she were with more, it was to observe, certainly not to help. Signe had an eye to all and everybody, and divided her attention without its being observed. If Odegaard spoke about Signe with Petra, he heard a hopeless lover's complaint; but if he talked about Petra with Signe, the words were very few. The girls often talked together, and without constraint; but it was only upon indifferent subjects.

To Signe, Odegaard owed a debt of gratitude; for it was to her he owed, what he called his "new self." The first letter he received from her in his great distress, was like a gentle touch upon his forehead. So carefully she told how Petra had come to them, misunderstood and persecuted, so delicately she added, that the accident of her arrival might be the guidance of God, "that nothing should be rent in pieces;" it sounded like a distant horn in the forest, as one stands and wonders which direction to take.

Signe's letters followed him where he travelled, and were the thread he held by. She thought in every line to lead Petra straight to his embrace, but in reality she was doing just the opposite; for through these letters, Petra's taste for art rose up before him; the key note to her talents, which he had sought for himself in vain, Signe, without knowing it, had constantly in view,--and as soon as he understood this, he saw both his own and her mistake, and thereby became as a new man.

He watched himself narrowly in writing to Signe about that which her letters had taught him. The first word must not come from Petra's friends, but from Petra herself, that nothing should be hastened before its time. But now he also saw Petra

in a new light. These moments constantly chasing one another, each one individually felt in full power, but regarded ad infinitum, opposed to each other, what could they be but the foreshadowing of an artist life? And the work must be to unite them into a complete whole; otherwise it would be only patchwork, and life itself unreal. Therefore: not too early to enter upon her career! Reticence as long as possible, yes even opposition.

Thus occupied, before he was aware of it, Petra had once more become the constant occupation of his mind, but with a DIFFERENT object. He studied art from every point of view, and especially artists, most of all, the artists of the stage. He saw much to appall a Christian, he saw the enormous abuses, but did he not see the same around him, even in the church itself? Though there were hypocritical ministers, the calling was still the same, great, eternal. If the search after truth wherever begun, gains power in life and poetry, should it not also reach the stage? Having assured himself on this point, he was glad to see from Signers letters, that Petra was developing her mind, and that Signe was the right one to help her. And now he had returned to see and thank the gentle guide, who knew not herself what she was to him.

But he had also come to see Petra again. How far had she got now? The word had been spoken, he could therefore talk freely with her about it; this was a relief to both, for thus they spoke not of the past.

In the meantime they were interrupted by guests from town, invited and uninvited! The affair was already so far advanced, that a single well employed opportunity must make all clear,--and this the guests brought with them. A large party was invited to meet them, and when after dinner, the gentlemen were together in the study, the conversation turned upon the stage; for a chaplain had seen a work on Christian ethics open upon the dean's table, and his eye had caught the appalling word: Theatre. This led to a hasty discussion, in the midst of which the dean entered;

he had not been present at dinner, having been called away to a dying bed; he was very serious, and neither ate, nor took any part in the conversation; but he filled his pipe and listened. As soon as Odegaard observed this, he joined in the conversation himself, but for a long time he tried in vain to explain his views, for the chaplain had a habit of exclaiming every time a link in the chain of evidence was about to be adduced: "I deny it!" and then that which was about to be a proof, must itself be proved; consequently the matter was always going backwards; from the theatre, they had already passed to navigation, and now to get something proved in that, they were just going over to agriculture.

This was too much, so Odegaard elected himself chairman. There were several ministers present besides the chaplain, there was also a captain, a little swarthy man, with an immense abdomen, and a pair of small legs that went stumping one after the other. Odegaard called upon the chaplain to state his objections to the theatre. He began:

"Good men of even heathen times were opposed to the drama, Plato, Aristotle, because it was ruinous to morals. Socrates it is true, sometimes visited the theatre, but if any one concludes from that, that he approved of it, I deny it; one must see much of which one does not approve. The early Christians were expressly warned against the play, vide Tertullian, and since the revival of the drama in later times, earnest Christians have spoken and written against it, I name such men as Spener and Francke; I name a writer on Christian ethics, as Schwarz, I name Schleiermacher. ('Hear! hear!' cried the captain, for this name he knew.) The two latter admit dramatic representations to be allowable, and Schleiermacher even thinks that in a private company and by amateurs, a good play may be performed, but he condemns the actors on the stage. As a profession, it presents so many temptations to the Christian, that he MUST avoid it. And is it not also a temptation to the spectator? To be moved by fictitious suffering, to be elevated by a fictitious paragon of virtue, such (which in reading one can better defend oneself from,) entice

us to believe, that we are ourselves what we see before us, our energy and force of will are weakened by it, it drags us down into the mere wish to see and hear, making us visionary. Is it not so? Who are the frequenters of the theatre? Idlers in search of amusement, voluptuaries who will be stimulated, vain people who wish to be seen, visionaries who flee hither to escape the actual life against which they dare not contend. Sin behind the curtain, sin before it! I have never heard sincere Christians say anything else."

The Capt.: "I am beginning to tremble for myself; if I have been in such a den of wolves each time I have attended the theatre, the devil----" "Fie captain," said a little girl who had come in with them, "you mustn't swear, or else you'll go to hell!"--"Aye my child, yes, yes."--Then Odegaard rose to speak:

"Plato raised the same objections against poetry as against the stage, and Aristotle's opinion is doubtful,--therefore I will leave them alone. The early Christians did well to abstain from the HEATHEN play,--I will also leave them alone. That earnest Christians in modern times should have their scruples about the theatre, I can well understand; I have had them myself. But if one admits that a poet has liberty to write a drama, then an actor has liberty to play it, for in writing, what other does a poet do than play it--in his thoughts, with ardour, with passion, and 'whosoever looketh after a woman to lust after her,' &c.--you know the words of Christ Himself. When Schleiermacher says, that the drama may only be played privately and by amateurs, it is the same as to assert, that the talents God has given us, shall be neglected, whereas the meaning really is, that they shall be developed to the highest possible perfection; and to this end have we received them. We are all acting every day, when we imitate others in joke or earnest. Where, in any single instance these powers outweigh all others, I really wonder if such a one ceased to cultivate them, if it would not soon be shown that THIS was sin. For he who does not follow his proper calling, becomes unfit for another, leads an unsettled wavering life,--in short becomes a far easier prey to temptation. Where work and inclination fall together,

much temptation is locked out. Now if you say the calling is in itself too full of temptation, well, every one feels it differently. To ME that calling possesses the greatest temptation that dupes one to believe he is righteous himself, because he bears the commands of the Righteous,--dupes him to believe he himself is believing, because he speaks to the belief of others, or more plainly said: 'To me the ministerial calling has the greatest temptation of all.'" (Great uproar: I deny it! Yes! Silence! I deny it! It's true! Silence!) The Captain: "Well I never heard before that the pulpit was worse than the stage!" Laughter and cries from all: "No, he never said it was." Captain: "Yes, the deuce----" "No, no, captain, the devil will be coming!"--"Well, my child, well, well!" And Odegaard took up the thread:

"All the temptation of being excited in a moment, of sinking down into the mere wish to see and hear, of taking the models of virtue, and without trouble appropriating their life as ours, this verily is also present in the church!" (The same clamour again.)

The ladies could no longer hear this uproar, without finding out what it was. Now the door was open. Odegaard seeing Petra among them, said with emphasis: "It is true there are actors who get excited upon the stage, then rush to church, and get excited there,--and still they are the same. But in general actors, in common with seamen, are so often placed in the direst extremity, (for the moment before they enter must be awful!) and so often come face to face with the great, the unexpected, are so often called to be instruments in the hands of the Lord, that they bear in their hearts a fear and longing, a strong feeling of unworthiness; and this we know, that Christ preferred to be with publicans and penitent women. I give them no charter; verily the greater their work, the greater their guilt if their work leads them into rashness, or degenerates into loose frivolity. But as there is no actor, who has not learnt, by a series of disappointments how worthless applause and flattery is, although the most behave as though believing in it,--in the same way we see their mistakes and faults, but we do not know so well their own relation to them, and on

that it depends--considered from a Christian point of view."

Several rose, and began to speak all together, but--

"Fourteen years surely I must have been--"

sounded in from the piano, and they streamed into the room; for it was Signe who was singing, and Signe's Swedish melodies and the way in which she sang them, were most delightful. One song followed another, and as the first melodies of the land, faithful messages from the heart of a great people, had had an elevating effect, and they were now standing in anticipation, Odegaard rose and asked Petra to recite a poem. She must have been conscious of it, for her face was crimson. She stepped forward at once,--though she trembled so that she was obliged to hold fast by the back of a chair,--turned very pale and began:--

He could not get leave to go to sea,

His mother was weak, his father was old, The farm was increasing a hundred fold:--"Why should he with the Vikings roam? Here he has all he can wish for at home."

But the youth in the clouds, as they onward sped,

Saw armèd hosts to the battle led; And the youth would pine when he saw the sun, 'Twas the King in state after victories won. He pondered the sagas of ancient days, He forgot his work in the Vikings' praise.

There came a morning, away went he,

To the outermost isle by the open sea, To see the breakers come dashing in, And list to the distant battle's din. It was a day in the early spring, When the voice of the storm is on the wing: "Earth shall not ice-bound slumber longer!"--

A sight he saw,--his will grew stronger. They lay a ship, in a steel grey cove,

Resting after a stormy raid,-- In sooth she seemed better inclined to rove, Though her sail was bound and her anchor laid, For the sail and the mast were going to and fro, And the vessel was frothing scum with her bow.

On board they were having a little rest,

To eat and to sleep was their present behest;-- Up from the cliff they heard one calling, --The words of a fool they seemed, thus falling,-- "Dare no one steer in a storm so strong, Then give me the rudder;--ah! I long!"

Some looked up to the rocky brow,

Others nor cared to see just now; None of them rose from the mid-day fare, Down came a stone and felled two men there.

Up they sprang from deck and cheer,

Threw down the platters,--seized bow and spear; Up whizzed the arrows,--while unprepared He stood on the cliff and his will declared: "Chieftain with grace wilt yield thy vessel, Or longest thou first to strive and wrestle?"

To listen to such was but time to waste,

In answer a spear was hurled in haste,

It hit him not; and calmly he said:

"None wait for me in the halls of the dead, But thou who afar the sea hast ploughèd Canst hasten home, or hie thee thither.-- All that under thee thou hast bowèd Must pass to me; so came I hither! For me thou gatheredst, to me it falleth; My time hath come, for me it calleth."

The other laughed from his height in scorn:

"Verily if thou indeed so longest, Come prove thee to be my warrior strongest!" "That can I not, I'm a chieftain born. I must command for I know my way; The new can never the old obey."

But for the answer in vain he listened

Then down he sprang, his eyes they glistened: "Ye warriors! your chieftain the duty owes To prove to whom Odin his favour shows. Then heroes! serve ye the one he aideth. Shame to him that his yoke evadeth!"

Red in wroth grew the chieftain's face;

Sprang in the sea and swam to land; The other leapt hastily down to the strand And took him up in his strong embrace.

But the chieftain saw in the light of his eyes,

That his soul was of noble and lofty guise. "Throw him arms across for none he weareth," On board he cried;--"if the day beareth Thee victory, say that himself he gave The sword that brought him a hasty grave."

The struggle waxed warm on the mountain side,

Each blow fell back with an echoing bomb;-- The wrothful "Dragon" snuffed in her fume, Felled was her champion in his pride.

There rent a scream the mountains o'er,

Each man would revenge the mighty wrong; From stem to stem there rose a throng, And soon they stood on the rocky shore. Then up the dying man swung his hand To give amongst them his last command: "A man must fall when his work is done; The end of a hero song is grand; Make him your chieftain,--a worthy one." His lips grew white, his strength was past, They hastened up as he breathed his last; For him was a place of honour stored, Thereto he pointed,--at Odin's board.

The new commander made no delay,

He sprang on a stone and the order gave: "First raise a mound o'er the hero's grave, And mind ye the noble deeds of his day. But e'er the night shall the anchor be weighed, Nor e'en by the dead must our journey be stayed."

The beacon was raised, the sail was spread,

The Dragon soon over the waters sped; A song of remembrance clang o'er the wave To him they had left in the island grave,-- An ode of welcome rang in the ear Of the youth who stood at the helm to steer.

And just as his home was near in view,

And all were rushing down to the strand, With cries of wonder to see the hand That was steering Oger's sea-worthy shoe,-- Fell the evening sun upon sail and shield, And red o'er the height by the battle field.

The vessel he steered so near the land,

That frightened they cried: "The ship will strand!" He turned her round with a lurch and heave, And he smiled upon them: "Now have I leave?"

The poem was said tremblingly, solemnly, without a trace of affectation. They stood as if a ray had shot up among them from the earth, in all the splendours of the rainbow. No one spoke, no one moved;--but the captain could no longer control himself, he sprang up, puffed, stretched himself, and said: "Well I don't know how it is with you; but when I am taken in this way, the deuce take me if--"--"Captain, there you swore again," said the little girl, and held up her finger threateningly; "the devil will come this very hour and take you!"--"Well, it is all the same my child, let him come, for now I must, the deuce take me, must have a patriotic song!" And so he began with a voice so terrific, that one would have thought the great stomach gave pressure as organ bellows--and the rest with him:--

I will watch our land, I will build up our land

I will further its cause in my prayers, in my home,

I will increase its gains, And its wants seek with pains

From the boundary out to the driving sea foam.

There is sunlight enough, There are corn fields enough,

If we pull but together there's plenty of stuff.

Midst the labour and strife There's poetical life

To raise up our land if our love's strong enough.

To search and to save We went far o'er the wave,

In the countries around rise our watch towers of yore;

But our ensign to-day Waveth further away,

And it waveth in vigour as never before.

And our future is great, For the three cloven state

Shall be joinèd again, shall herself be once more.

Then whate'er you can spare Let the neediest share,

And a gathering river shall treasure the store.

Scandinavia's ours, And we'll value her powers,

What she was, what she is, what she shall be again,

And as love has its birth In the dear homely earth,

From the seed corn of love shall she spring up again.

Signe came and put her arm round Petra, and drew her into the study where no one was. "Really," she said, "you have so captivated me that I must:----Petra, shall we be friends again!"--"Oh, Signe, then at last you forgive me!"--"Yes, now I can, however things turn! Petra, do you not love Odegaard?"--"Heavens, Signe!"--"Petra! I have thought it from the very first day,--and now at last he has come to----All that I have thought and done for you in these two and a half years has been with this in view, and father has thought the same; I believe he has already spoken to Odegaard about it."--"But Signe----!" "Hush," she put her hand to Petra's lips and ran away, there was some one calling; it was tea time.

There was wine on the table, as the dean had been absent from dinner; he had been very grave all the afternoon, and now sat as though no one were present, till they were about to leave the table, when he tapped on his wine glass, and said: "I have a betrothal to announce!"--Every one looked at the young girls who were sitting together, and these neither of them knew whether to fall from their chairs or remain seated.

"I have a betrothal to announce," repeated the dean, as though he found it difficult to

proceed. "I must confess that at first it was not just what I wished."--All the guests looked at Odegaard in astonishment, and their amazement knew no bounds when they saw him sitting quietly looking at the dean.--"To speak plainly, I thought that he was not worthy of her."--The guests here became so embarrassed that no one dare longer look up, and as the girls had not ventured to do so at all, the dean had but one face to talk to, and that was Odegaard's, who meanwhile was enjoying perfect composure. "But now," continued the dean, "now, when I have learnt to know him better, it has ended in my doubting whether she is worthy of HIM, so noble does he appear to me; for it is Art, the great dramatic Art betrothed to Petra, my foster daughter, my dear child; may it go well with you! I tremble at the thought, but that which belongs together must go together. God be with you, my daughter!" In a moment she was in his arms.

As no one sat down again, the whole company naturally left the table. Petra went up to Odegaard, who drew her into the furthest window; he had something to say to her now, but she must first say: "I owe it all to you!"--"No, Petra; I have been only a kind brother; it was a great sin of mine that I wished to be more; for if it had happened it would have hindered your whole career."--"Odegaard!" They held each other's hands, but did not look up; a moment after, he left her.

The day following Odegaard left the deanery.

Just after Christmas, Petra received a letter with a large official seal; she felt quite nervous and took it in to the dean to open. It was from the magistrate in her native town, and read thus: "Whereas Pedro Ohlsen, who yesterday departed this life, has left a will as follows:

'That which I leave behind me, which is exactly noted down in the account book, that is in the blue chest, standing in my room at Gunlaug Aamund's on the bank, and of which the said Gunlaug has the key, even as she alone knows the whole matter,--I wish,--if she, Gunlaug Aamund, gives her mind thereto, which she need not do

unless she likes, to fulfil the condition which I have named, which she alone who is the only one who knows it, can fulfil,--that it should pass to Miss Petra, daughter of the said Gunlaug Aamund, that is to say, if Miss Petra thinks it worth while to remember a decrepit old man, to whom she has done good though she did not know it, as she could not do, and who has been his only comfort in his last years, wherefore he has thought to give her a little joy in return, which she must not despise. God be merciful to me a sinner.

Pedro Ohlsen.'

I beg to ask if you will communicate with your mother respecting it, or you wish me to do it."

The next mail brought a letter from the mother, written by Pastor Odegaard, the only one in whom she dare now confide; it contained the information that she was willing to fulfil the requirement, namely to inform Petra who Pedro was.

This information and the legacy gave Petra a peculiar feeling; it seemed as if everything were now putting itself to rights; it was another reminder of her departure.

Then it was for her artist life that old Peer Ohlsen had fiddled his money together at weddings and dances, and son and grandson in different ways, by little and little added thereto. The sum was not great but it was sufficient to bring her further out into the world, and thus more quickly forward.

The thought rose as sunshine before her, that now she could repay her mother, her mother should come to her, every day she could give her some happiness. She wrote a long letter to her every post day, she could scarcely wait for the answer, and when it came it was a bitter disappointment, for Gunlaug thanked her, but observed, "that each was best in his own place." Then the dean promised to write, and when Gunlaug got his letter, she could no longer contain herself, she must tell her sailors and other acquaintances, that her daughter was going to be something great, and

wanted her to go to her. Thus the matter became a very important topic in the town, it was discussed on the quay, in the boats, and in all kitchens. Gunlaug, who up to this time had never named her daughter, now spoke of nothing but "my daughter Petra," even as no one spoke of anything else to her.

But still though it grew near to the time of Petra's departure, Gunlaug had not given her consent, which grieved the daughter much. It was expressly promised her on the contrary, both by the dean and Signe, that they would be present when she should make her first appearance.

The snow began to disappear from the mountains, the fields to grow a little green. She had only a few more days at the deanery, and she and Signe went round and bade farewell to all and everything,--especially to the places they mutually held dear. Then they were informed by a peasant, that Odegaard was up at Oygarene, and would soon be coming down to them. The girls both grew very shy, and ceased to go out.

When Odegaard came, he was lighthearted and happy as never seen before. His errand in the district was to establish a free high school, and at first, till he got a teacher, he meant to conduct it himself; afterwards he would carry out other plans. In this way he would repay he said, some of the debt his father owed to the district,--and his father had promised to come to him as soon as the house was ready. It was to be near the deanery. The dean, as well as Signe, was exceedingly pleased at the prospect; Petra too, but she felt it a little strange, that he should settle down there just as she was leaving.

The dean wished that the day before Petra's departure they should partake of the Lord's supper together. So a quiet solemnity fell over the last days, and when they spoke it was in a half whisper. In these days the dean never passed by Petra without stroking her hair, and at the holy ceremony in church, at which with the exception of an officiating clergyman and the sexton, there were none present but themselves, he

spoke particularly to her, and spoke as he would do at their own table on a birthday or holiday. It would now soon be shown, he said, whether the time that in prayer for Divine grace she this day brought to a close, had laid a good foundation. No man's life is really perfected before he reaches his right vocation. Our work is revealed to us, and he who comes with truth, and holds himself worthy, will reap the greatest and most lasting harvest. It is true the Lord often makes use of the unworthy also, even as in a higher sense we are all unworthy. He makes use of our longings. But there is a vocation that no man can discover from his longings alone, and that he supposed she was aiming at; every one must strive to reach the highest. He bade her come frequently to see them, for it is the intention of the church that companionship in faith should help and strengthen. If she had erred, she would here always meet with sympathy, and if she herself understood not that she had strayed, they would most affectionately tell her.

The next day at the parting meal, he bade her the most tender farewell, "He was of her friend's opinion," he said, "that she ought to begin her career ALONE. In the struggle she would meet, she would find that it was good to know, that in one place there lived a few on whom she could rely; only to know with certainty that they were constantly PRAYING for her,--she would see that it would help!"--After the adieu to Petra, he turned with a welcome to Odegaard. "To be united in love to one and the same is the most beautiful introduction to love one another." The dean certainly never thought in this greeting, of that which first made Signe red, then Petra; and if Odegaard; they did not know, for neither of them ventured to look at him.

But when the horses were at the door, and the three friends stood around the young girl, and all the servants round the carriage, Petra whispered, as for the last time she embraced Signe: "I know I shall soon hear important news from you; may God bless it!"

An hour after she saw only the white pinnacles that showed where the place lay.

XII.

THE SCENE.

One evening just before Christmas the theatre of the metropolis was sold out; a new actress was to appear, about whom there were the greatest expectations. Sprung from the people--her mother was a poor fisherwoman--she had reached her present position by the help of others who had discovered her talents, and she gave great promise. In the time before the curtain rose, all sorts of things were whispered about her; she was said to have been a strange unruly child, and later when grown up, to have been betrothed to six at one time, and to have kept it going for half a year. The town was in such an uproar on her account, that she had had to be conducted out of it by a guard of police; it was remarkable that the director should allow such a character to appear. Others affirmed there was not the slightest truth in the statement; she had been educated in a clergyman's family in Bergen's shire, from the time she was ten years old; she was a cultivated and amiable girl, they knew her well, she must have wonderful talent; she was so handsome.

Others were there who were better authority. First the well-known fish merchant, Yngve Vold. He had come here accidentally on a business journey; it was said that the brilliant Spanish lady, to whom he was married, made the house at home so hot, that he travelled merely to cool himself. He had taken the largest box in the house, and invited his hotel acquaintances to go with him to see "something, devilish something!" He was in remarkable spirits, till he suddenly caught sight of----could it be he?----in a box in the second tier and with a whole ship's company round him?----no! yes!----verily it was Gunnar Ask! Gunnar Ask who through his mother's money had become owner and captain of "The Norwegian Constitution," had in cruising out of the fiord come to sail side by side with a ship bearing the name: "The

Danish Constitution," and as Gunnar thought he observed it trying to pass him, such certainly could not be permitted; he put out all the sail he possessed, the old Constitution creaked, and the consequence was, that in his endeavour to scud before the wind as long and as far as possible, he ran the ship aground in a most preposterous place, and was now reluctantly detained in the town while the vessel was being patched up. One day he met Petra in the street, and she was so thoroughly kind both then and afterwards, that he not only forgot his grudge, but called himself the greatest fool that ever sailed from their native place, that he could ever have imagined himself worthy of such a girl as Petra. To-day he had taken tickets at a premium for the whole of his crew, and mentally resolved to treat them between each act, and the seamen, all from Petra's native place, and familiar with the mother's tavern, that earthly paradise, felt Petra's honour to be their own, and sat and promised each other that they would applaud as had never been heard before.

Down below in the parquet one could see the dean's thick bristly hair. He looked calm, he had entrusted her cause to a Higher Power. By his side sat Signe, now Signe Odegaard. Her husband, herself and Petra, had just returned from a three month's tour on the continent; she looked happy, as she sat and smiled over to Odegaard, for between them sat an old woman with snow-white hair, that rose above her brown face like a crown; sitting higher than everybody, she could be seen from the whole house, and soon every opera glass was directed towards her, for it was said she was the young actress's mother. She who bore a man's name, now also produced so powerful an impression, that she shed peace over the daughter. A youthful people is full of expectancy, it possesses faith in the inner power of its nature, and the faith was roused by the sight of this mother? She herself saw neither anything nor anybody; she was indifferent as to what was coming; she was there only to see whether people were kind to her daughter or not.

The time was almost up; conversation died away in the suspense that by degrees pervaded all, and did them good.

A flourish of drums, trumpets and horns, suddenly opened the overture; Oehlenschläger's "Axel and Valborg" was to be played, and Petra had herself chosen this. She was sitting behind the scenes and listening.

Before the curtain, the small number of her countrymen that the house could muster, were trembling on her account, as one always does when expecting anything personally dear of one's own to be brought forward. It was as if each were about to appear on the stage himself; at such moments many prayers arise, even from hearts that otherwise seldom pray.

The overture grew softer, peace fell over the harmonies, they melted gradually away as in sunlight. It was over,--anxious silence ensued.

The curtain rose.

FOOTNOTES:

Footnote 1: Norwegian idiom, to get a long nose--to be disappointed.--Tr.

Footnote 2: The farms are often built on a steep mountain side.--Tr.

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