

Stories by various Scandinavian writers

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STORIES BY FOREIGN AUTHORS

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THE FATHER

BY

BJORNSTJERNE BJORNSON

From "The Bridal March." Translated by Prof. R. B. Anderson.

THE FATHER

BY

BJORNSTJERNE BJORNSON

The man whose story is here to be told was the wealthiest and most influential person in his parish; his name was Thord Overaas. He appeared in the priest's study one day, tall and earnest.

"I have gotten a son," said he, "and I wish to present him for baptism."

"What shall his name be?"

"Finn,--after my father."

"And the sponsors?"

They were mentioned, and proved to be the best men and women of Thord's relations in the parish.

"Is there anything else?" inquired the priest, and looked up.

The peasant hesitated a little.

"I should like very much to have him baptized by himself," said he, finally.

"That is to say on a week-day?"

"Next Saturday, at twelve o'clock noon."

"Is there anything else?" inquired the priest.

"There is nothing else;" and the peasant twirled his cap, as though he were about to go.

Then the priest rose. "There is yet this, however," said he, and walking toward Thord, he took him by the hand and looked gravely into his eyes: "God grant that the child may become a blessing to you!"

One day sixteen years later, Thord stood once more in the priest's study.

"Really, you carry your age astonishingly well, Thord," said the priest; for he saw no change whatever in the man.

"That is because I have no troubles," replied Thord.

To this the priest said nothing, but after a while he asked: "What is your pleasure this evening?"

"I have come this evening about that son of mine who is to be confirmed to-morrow."

"He is a bright boy."

"I did not wish to pay the priest until I heard what number the boy would have when he takes his place in church to-morrow."

"He will stand number one."

"So I have heard; and here are ten dollars for the priest."

"Is there anything else I can do for you?" inquired the priest, fixing his eyes on Thord.

"There is nothing else."

Thord went out.

Eight years more rolled by, and then one day a noise was heard outside of the priest's study, for many men were approaching, and at their head was Thord, who entered first.

The priest looked up and recognized him.

"You come well attended this evening, Thord," said he.

"I am here to request that the banns may be published for my son; he is about to marry Karen Storliden, daughter of Gudmund, who stands here beside me."

"Why, that is the richest girl in the parish."

"So they say," replied the peasant, stroking back his hair with one hand.

The priest sat a while as if in deep thought, then entered the names in his book, without making any comments, and the men wrote their signatures underneath. Thord laid three dollars on the table.

"One is all I am to have," said the priest.

"I know that very well; but he is my only child, I want to do it handsomely."

The priest took the money.

"This is now the third time, Thord, that you have come here on your son's account."

"But now I am through with him," said Thord, and folding up his pocket-book he said farewell and walked away.

The men slowly followed him.

A fortnight later, the father and son were rowing across the lake, one calm, still day, to Storliden to make arrangements for the wedding.

"This thwart is not secure," said the son, and stood up to straighten the seat on which he was sitting.

At the same moment the board he was standing on slipped from under him; he threw out his arms, uttered a shriek, and fell overboard.

"Take hold of the oar!" shouted the father, springing to his feet and holding out the oar.

But when the son had made a couple of efforts he grew stiff.

"Wait a moment!" cried the father, and began to row toward his son. Then the son rolled over on his back, gave his father one long look, and sank.

Thord could scarcely believe it; he held the boat still, and stared at the spot where his son had gone down, as though he must surely come to the surface again. There rose some bubbles, then some more, and finally one large one that burst; and the lake lay there as smooth and bright as a mirror again.

For three days and three nights people saw the father rowing round and round the spot, without taking either food or sleep; he was dragging the lake for the body of his son. And toward morning of the third day he found it, and carried it in his arms up over the hills to his gard.

It might have been about a year from that day, when the priest, late one autumn evening, heard some one in the passage outside of the door, carefully trying to find the latch. The priest opened the door, and in walked a tall, thin man, with bowed form and white hair. The priest looked long at him before he recognized him. It was Thord.

"Are you out walking so late?" said the priest, and stood still in front of him.

"Ah, yes! it is late," said Thord, and took a seat.

The priest sat down also, as though waiting. A long, long silence followed. At last Thord said:

"I have something with me that I should like to give to the poor; I want it to be invested as a legacy in my son's name."

He rose, laid some money on the table, and sat down again. The priest counted it.

"It is a great deal of money," said he.

"It is half the price of my gard. I sold it today."

The priest sat long in silence. At last he asked, but gently:

"What do you propose to do now, Thord?"

"Something better."

They sat there for a while, Thord with downcast eyes, the priest with his eyes fixed on Thord. Presently the priest said, slowly and softly:

"I think your son has at last brought you a true blessing."

"Yes, I think so myself," said Thord, looking up, while two big tears coursed slowly down his cheeks.

WHEN FATHER BROUGHT HOME THE LAMP

BY

JUHANI AHO

In spite of ethnological and philological distinctions, geographical association makes it more natural to include a Finnish tale in the volume with Scandinavian stories than in any other volume of this collection.

From "Squire Hellman." Translated by R. Nisbet Bain. Published by the Cassell Publishing Co.

WHEN FATHER BROUGHT HOME THE LAMP

BY

JUHANI AHO

When father bought the lamp, or a little before that, he said to mother:

"Hark ye, mother--oughtn't we to buy us a lamp?"

"A lamp? What sort of a lamp?"

"What! Don't you know that the storekeeper who lives in the market town has brought from St. Petersburg lamps that actually burn better than ten PAREA? [Footnote: A pare (pr. payray; Swed., perta; Ger., pergei) is a resinous pine chip, or splinter, used instead of torch or candle to light the poorer houses in Finland.] They've already got a lamp of the sort at the parsonage."

"Oh, yes! Isn't it one of those things which shines in the middle of the room so that we can see to read in every corner, just as if it was broad daylight?"

"That's just it. There's oil that burns in it, and you only have to light it of an evening, and it burns on without going out till the next morning."

"But how can the wet oil burn?"

"You might as well ask--how can brandy burn?"

"But it might set the whole place on fire. When brandy begins to burn you can't put it out, even with water."

"How can the place be set on fire when the oil is shut up in a glass, and the fire as well?"

"In a glass? How can fire burn in a glass--won't it burst?"

"Won't what burst?"

"The glass."

"Burst! No, it never bursts. It might burst, I grant you, if you screwed the fire up too high, but you're not obliged to do that."

"Screw up the fire? Nay, dear, you're joking--how CAN you screw up fire?"

"Listen, now! When you turn the screw to the right, the wick mounts--the lamp, you know, has a wick, like any common candle, and a flame too--but if you turn the screw to the left, the flame gets smaller, and then, when you blow it, it goes out."

"It goes out! Of course! I But I don't understand it a bit yet, however much you may explain--some sort of new-fangled gentlefolk arrangement, I suppose."

"You'll understand it right enough when I've bought one."

"How much does it cost?"

"Seven and a half marks, and the oil separate at one mark the can."

"Seven and a half marks and the oil as well! Why, for that you might buy parea for many a long day--that is, of course, if you were inclined to waste money on such things at all, but when Pekka splits them not a penny is lost."

"And you'll lose nothing by the lamp, either! Parea wood costs money too, and you can't find it everywhere on our land now as you used to. You have to get leave to look for such wood, and drag it hither to the bog from the most out-of-the-way places--and it's soon used up, too."

Mother knew well enough that parea wood is not so quickly used up as all that, as nothing had been said about it up to now, and that it was only an excuse to go away and buy this lamp. But she wisely held her tongue so as not to vex father, for then the lamp and all would have been unbought and unseen. Or else some one else might manage to get a lamp first for his farm, and then the whole parish would begin talking about the farm that had been the FIRST, after the parsonage, to use a lighted lamp. So mother thought the matter over, and then she said to father:

"Buy it, if you like; it is all the same to me if it is a parea that burns, or any other sort of oil, if only I can see to spin. When, pray, do you think of buying it?"

"I thought of setting off to-morrow--I have some other little business with the storekeeper as well."

It was now the middle of the week, and mother knew very well that the other business could very well wait till Saturday, but she did not say anything now either, but, "the sooner the better," thought she.

And that same evening father brought in from the storehouse the big travelling chest in which grandfather, in his time, had stowed his provisions when he came from Uleaborg, and bade mother fill it with hay and lay a little cotton-wool in the middle of it. We children asked why they put nothing in the box but hay and a little wool in the middle, but she bade us hold our tongues, the whole lot of us. Father was in a better humor, and explained that he was going to bring a lamp from the storekeeper, and that it was of glass, and might be broken to bits if he stumbled or if the sledge bumped too much.

That evening we children lay awake a long time and thought of the new lamp; but old scullery-Pekka, the man who used to split up all the parea, began to snore as soon as ever the evening parea was put out. And he didn't once ask what sort of a thing the lamp was, although we talked about it ever so much.

The journey took father all day, and a very long time it seemed to us all. We didn't even relish our food that day, although we had milk soup for dinner. But scullery-Pekka gobbled and guzzled as much as all of us put together, and spent the day in splitting parea till he had filled the outhouse full. Mother, too, didn't spin much

flax that day either, for she kept on going to the window and peeping out, over the ice, after father. She said to Pekka, now and then, that perhaps we shouldn't want all those parea any more, but Pekka couldn't have laid it very much to heart, for he didn't so much as ask the reason why.

It was not till supper time that we heard the horses' bells in the courtyard.

With the bread crumbs in our mouths, we children rushed out, but father drove us in again and bade scullery-Pekka come and help with the chest. Pekka, who had already been dozing away on the bench by the stove, was so awkward as to knock the chest against the threshold as he was helping father to carry it into the room, and he would most certainly have got a sound drubbing for it from father if only he had been younger, but he was an old fellow now, and father had never in his life struck a man older than himself. Nevertheless, Pekka would have heard a thing or two from father if the lamp HAD gone to pieces, but fortunately no damage had been done.

"Get up on the stove, you lout!" roared father at Pekka, and up on the stove Pekka crept.

But father had already taken the lamp out of the chest, and now let it hang down from one hand.

"Look! there it is now! How do you think it looks? You pour the oil into this glass, and that stump of ribbon inside is the wick-- hold that pare a little further off, will you!"

"Shall we light it?" said mother, as she drew back.

"Are you mad? How can it be lighted when there's no oil in it?"

"Well, but can't you pour some in, then?"

"Pour in oil? A likely tale! Yes, that's just the way when people don't understand these things; but the storekeeper warned me again and again never to pour the oil in by firelight, as it might catch fire and burn the whole house down."

"Then when will you pour the oil into it!"

"In the daytime--daytime, d'ye hear? Can't you wait till day? It isn't such a great marvel as all that." "Have you SEEN it burn, then?"

"Of course I have. What a question! I've seen it burn many a time, both at the parsonage and when we tried this one here at the storekeeper's."

"And it burned, did it?"

"Burned? Of course it did, and when we put up the shutters of the shop, you could have seen a needle on the floor. Look here, now! Here's a sort of capsule, and when the fire is burning in this fixed glass here, the light cannot creep up to the top, where it isn't wanted either, but spreads out downward, so that you could find a needle on the floor."

Now we should have all very much liked to try if we could find a needle on the floor, but father rang up the lamp to the roof and began to eat his supper.

"This evening we must be content, once more, with a pare," said father, as he ate; "but to-morrow the lamp shall burn in this very house."

"Look, father! Pekka has been splitting parea all day, and filled the outhouse with them."

"That's all right. We've fuel now, at any rate, to last us all the winter, for we sha'n't want them for anything else."

"But how about the bathroom and the stable?" said mother.

"In the bathroom we'll burn the lamp," said father.

That night I slept still less than the night before, and when I woke in the morning I could almost have wept, if I hadn't been ashamed, when I called to mind that the lamp was not to be lit till the evening. I had dreamed that father had poured oil into the lamp at night and that it had burned the whole day long.

Immediately when it began to dawn, father dug up out of that great travelling chest of his a big bottle, and poured something out of it into a smaller bottle. We should have very much liked to ask what was in this bottle, but we daren't, for father looked so solemn about it that it quite frightened us.

But when he drew the lamp a little lower down from the ceiling and began to bustle about it and unscrew it, mother could contain herself no longer, and asked him what he was doing.

"I am pouring oil into the lamp."

"Well, but you're taking it to pieces! How will you ever get everything you have unscrewed into its proper place again?"

Neither mother nor we knew what to call the thing which father took out from the glass holder.

Father said nothing, but he bade us keep further off. Then he filled the glass holder nearly full from the smaller bottle, and we now guessed that there was oil in the larger bottle also.

"Well, won't you light it now?" asked mother again, when all the unscrewed things had been put back into their places and father hoisted the lamp up to the ceiling again.

"What! in the daytime?"

"Yes--surely we might try it, to see how it will burn."

"It'll burn right enough. Just wait till the evening, and don't bother."

After dinner, scullery-Pekka brought in a large frozen block of wood to split up into parea, and cast it from his shoulders on to the floor with a thud which shook the whole room and set in motion the oil in the lamp.

"Steady!" cries father; "what are you making that row for?"

"I brought in this pare-block to melt it a bit--nothing else will do it--it is regularly frozen."

"You may save yourself the trouble then," said father, and he winked at us.

"Well, but you can't get a blaze out of it at all, otherwise."

"You may save yourself the trouble, I say."

"Are no more parea to be split up, then?"

"Well, suppose I DID say that no more parea were to be split up?"

"Oh! 't is all the same to me if master can get on without 'em."

"Don't you see, Pekka, what is hanging down from the rafters there?" When father put this question he looked proudly up at the lamp, and then he looked pityingly down upon Pekka.

Pekka put his clod in the corner, and then, but not till then, looked up at the lamp.

"It's a lamp," says father, "and when it burns you don't want any more pare light."

"Oh!" said Pekka, and, without a single word more, he went off to his chopping-block behind the stable, and all day long, just as on other days, he chopped a branch of his own height into little fagots; but all the rest of us were scarce able to get on with anything. Mother made believe to spin, but her supply of flax had not diminished by one-half when she shoved aside the spindle and went out. Father chipped away at first at the handle of his axe, but the work must have been a little against the grain, for he left it half done. After mother went away, father went out also, but whether he went to town or not I don't know. At any rate he forbade us to go out too, and promised us a whipping if we so much as touched the lamp with the tips of our fingers. Why, we should as soon have thought of fingering the priest's gold-embroidered chasuble. We were only afraid that the cord which held up all this splendor might break and we should get the blame of it

But time hung heavily in the sitting-room, and as we couldn't hit upon anything else, we resolved to go in a body to the sleighing hill. The town had a right of way to the river for fetching water therefrom, and this road ended at the foot of a good hill down which the sleigh could run, and then up the other side along the ice rift.

"Here come the Lamphill children," cried the children of the town, as soon as they saw us.

We understood well enough what they meant, but for all that we did not ask what Lamphill children they alluded to, for our farm was, of course, never called Lamphill.

"Ah, ah! We know! You've gone and bought one of them lamps for your place. We know all about it!"

"But how came you to know about it already?"

"Your mother mentioned it to my mother when she went through our place. She said that your father had bought from the storeman one of that sort of lamps that burn so brightly that one can find a needle on the floor--so at least said the justice's maid."

It is just like the lamp in the parsonage drawing-room, your father told us just now. I heard him say so with my own ears," said the innkeeper's lad.

"Then you really have got a lamp like that, eh?" inquired all the children of the town.

"Yes, we have; but it is nothing to look at in the daytime, but in the evening we'll all go there together."

And we went on sleighing down hill and up hill till dusk, and every time we drew our sleighs up to the hilltop, we talked about the lamp with the children of the town.

In this way the time passed quicker than we thought, and when we had sped down the hill for the last time, the whole lot of us sprang off homeward.

Pekka was standing at the chopping block and didn't even turn his head, although we all called to him with one voice to come and see how the lamp was lit. We children plunged headlong into the room in a body.

But at the door we stood stock-still. The lamp was already burning there beneath the rafters so brightly that we couldn't look at it without blinking.

"Shut the door; it's rare cold," cried father, from behind the table.

"They scurry about like fowls in windy weather," grumbled mother from her place by the fireside.

"No wonder the children are dazed by it, when I, old woman as I am, cannot help looking up at it," said the innkeeper's old mother.

"Our maid also will never get over it," said the magistrate's step-daughter.

It was only when our eyes had got a little used to the light that we saw that the room was half full of neighbors.

"Come nearer, children, that you may see it properly," said father, in a much milder voice than just before.

"Knock that snow off your feet, and come hither to the stove; it looks quite splendid from here," said mother, in her turn.

Skipping and jumping, we went toward mother, and sat us all down in a row on the bench beside her. It was only when we were under her wing that we dared to examine the lamp more critically. We had never once thought that it would burn as it was burning now, but when we came to sift the matter out we arrived at the conclusion that, after all, it was burning just as it ought to burn. And when we had peeped at it a good bit longer, it seemed to us as if we had fancied all along that it would be exactly as it was.

But what we could not make out at all was how the fire was put into that sort of glass. We asked mother, but she said we should see how it was done afterward.

The townsfolk vied with each other in praising the lamp, and one said one thing, and another said another. The innkeeper's old mother maintained that it shone just as calmly and brightly as the stars of heaven. The magistrate, who had sad eyes, thought it excellent because it didn't smoke, and you could burn it right in the middle of the hall without blackening the walls in the least, to which father replied that it was, in fact, meant for the hall, but did capitally for the dwelling room as well, and one had no need now to dash hither and thither with parea, for all could now see by a single light, let them be never so many.

When mother observed that the lesser chandelier in church scarcely gave a better light, father bade me take my ABC book, and go to the door to see if I could read it there. I went and began to read: "Our Father." But then they all said: "The lad knows that by heart." Mother then stuck a hymn-book in my hand, and I set off with "By the Waters of Babylon."

"Yes; it is perfectly marvellous!" was the testimony of the townsfolk.

Then said father: "Now if any one had a needle, you might throw it on the floor and you would see that it would be found at once."

The magistrate's step-daughter had a needle in her bosom, but when she threw it on the floor, it fell into a crack, and we couldn't find it at all--it was so small.

It was only after the townsfolk had gone that Pekka came in.

He blinked a bit at first at the unusual lamplight, but then calmly proceeded to take off his jacket and rag boots.

"What's that twinkling in the roof there enough to put your eyes out?" he asked at last, when he had hung his stockings up on the rafters.

"Come now, guess what it is," said father, and he winked at mother and us.

"I can't guess," said Pekka, and he came nearer to the lamp.

"Perhaps it's the church chandelier, eh?" said father jokingly.

"Perhaps," admitted Pekka; but he had become really curious, and passed his thumb along the lamp.

"There's no need to finger it," says father; "look at it, but don't touch it."

"All right, all right! I don't want to meddle with it!" said Pekka, a little put out, and he drew back to the bench alongside the wall by the door.

Mother must have thought that it was a sin to treat poor Pekka so, for she began to explain to him that it was not a church chandelier at all, but what people called a lamp, and that it was lit with oil, and that was why people didn't want parea any more.

But Pekka was so little enlightened by the whole explanation that he immediately began to split up the pare-wood log which he had dragged into the room the day before. Then father said to him that he had already told him there was no need to split parea any more.

"Oh! I quite forgot," said Pekka; "but there it may bide if it isn't wanted any more," and with that Pekka drove his pare knife into a rift in the wall.

"There let it rest at leisure," said father.

But Pekka said never a word more. A little while after that he began to patch up his boots, stretched on tiptoe to reach down a pare from the rafters, lit it, stuck it in a slit fagot, and sat him down on his little stool by the stove. We children saw this before father, who stood with his back to Pekka planing away at his axe-shaft under the lamp. We said nothing, however, but laughed and whispered among ourselves, "If only father sees that, what will he say, I wonder?" And when father did catch sight of him, he planted himself arms akimbo in front of Pekka, and asked him, quite spitefully, what sort of fine work he had there, since he must needs have a separate light all to himself?

"I am only patching up my shoes," said Pekka to father.

"Oh, indeed! Patching your shoes, eh? Then if you can't see to do that by the same light that does for me, you may take yourself off with your pare into the bath-house or behind it if you like."

And Pekka went.

He stuck his boots under his arm, took his stool in one hand and his pare in the other, and off he went. He crept softly through the door into the hall, and out of the hall into the yard. The pare light flamed outside in the blast, and played a little while, glaring red, over outhouses, stalls, and stables. We children saw the light

through the window and thought it looked very pretty. But when Pekka bent down to get behind the bath-house door, it was all dark again in the yard, and instead of the pare we saw only the lamp mirroring itself in the dark window-panes.

Henceforth we never burned a pare in the dwelling-room again. The lamp shone victoriously from the roof, and on Sunday evenings all the townsfolk often used to come to look upon and admire it. It was known all over the parish that our house was the first, after the parsonage, where the lamp had been used. After we had set the example, the magistrate bought a lamp like ours, but as he had never learned to light it, he was glad to sell it to the innkeeper, and the innkeeper has it still.

The poorer farmfolk, however, have not been able to get themselves lamps, but even now they do their long evening's work by the glare of a pare.

But when we had had the lamp a short time, father planed the walls of the dwelling-room all smooth and white, and they never got black again, especially after the old stove, which used to smoke, had to make room for another, which discharged its smoke outside and had a cowl.

Pekka made a new fireplace in the bath-house out of the stones of the old stove, and the crickets flitted thither with the stones-- at least their chirping was never heard any more in the dwelling room. Father didn't care a bit, but we children felt, now and then, during the long winter evenings, a strange sort of yearning after old times, so we very often found our way down to the bath-house to listen to the crickets, and there was Pekka sitting out the long evenings by the light of his pare.

THE FLYING MAIL

BY

M. GOLDSCHMIDT

From "The Flying Mail." Translated by Carl Larsen.

THE FLYING MAIL

BY

M. GOLDSCHMIDT

I.

Fritz Bagger had just been admitted to the bar. He had come home and entered his room, seeking rest. All his mental faculties were now relaxed after their recent exertion, and a long-restrained power was awakened. He had reached a crisis in life: the future lay before him,--the future, the future! What was it to be? He was twenty-four years old, and could turn himself whichever way he pleased, let fancy run to any line of the compass. Out upon the horizon, he saw little rose-colored clouds, and nothing therein but a certain undefined bliss. He put his hands over his eyes, and sought to bring this uncertainty into clear vision; and after a long time had elapsed, he said: "Yes, and so one marries."

"Yes, one marries," he continued, after a pause; "but whom?"

His thoughts now took a more direct course; but the pictures in his mind's eye had not become plainer. Again the horizon widely around was rose-colored, and between the tinted cloud-layers angel-heads peeped out--not Bible angels, which are neither man nor woman; but angelic girls, whom he didn't know, and who didn't know

him. The truth was, he didn't know anybody to whom he could give his heart, but longed, with a certain twenty-four-year power, for her to whom he could offer it,--her who was worthy to receive his whole self-made being, and in exchange give him all that queer imagined bliss, which is or ought to be in the world, as every one so firmly believes.

"Oh, I am a fool!" he said, as he suddenly became conscious that he was merely dreaming and wishing. He tried to think of something practical, thought upon a little picnic that was to be held in the evening; but the same dream returned and overpowered him, because the season of spring was in him, because life thrilled in him as in trees and plants when the spring sun shines.

He leaned upon the window-seat--it was in an attic--and let the wind cool his forehead. But while the wind refreshed, the street itself gave his mind new nourishment. Down there it moved, to him unknown, and veiled and hidden as at a masquerade. What a treasure might not that easy virgin foot carry! What a fancy might there not be moving in the head under that little bonnet, and what a heart might there not be beating under the folds of that shawl! But, too, all this preciousness might belong to another.

Alas! yes, there were certainly many amiable ones down there!--and if destiny should lead him to one of them, who was free, lovely, well-bred, of good family, could any one vouch that for her sake he was not giving up HER, the beau-ideal, the expected, whose portrait had shown itself between the tinted clouds? or, in any event, who can vouch for one's success in not missing the right one?

"Oh! life is a lottery, a cruel lottery; for to everybody there is but one drawing, and the whole man is at stake. Woe to the loser!"

After the expiration of some time, Fritz, under the influence of these meditations, had become melancholy, and all bright, smiling, and sure as life had recently appeared to him, so misty, uncertain, and painful it now appeared. For the second time he stroked his forehead, shook these thoughts from him, seeking more practical ones, and for the second time it terminated in going to the window and gazing out.

A whirlwind filled the street, slamming gates and doors, shaking windows and carrying dust with it up to his attic chamber. He was in the act of drawing back, when he saw a little piece of paper whirled in the dust cloud coming closely near him. He shut his eyes to keep out the dust, grasping at random for the paper, which he caught. At the same moment the whirlwind ceased, and the sky was again clear. This appeared to him ominous; the scrap of paper had certainly a meaning to him, a meaning for him; the unknown whom he had not really spoken to, yet had been so exceedingly busy with, could not quite accidentally have thus conveyed this to his hands, and with throbbing heart he retired from the window to read the message.

One side of the paper was blank; in the left-hand corner of the other side was written "beloved," and a little below it seemed as if there had been a signature, but now there was nothing left excepting the letters "geb."

"Geb, what does that mean?" asked Fritz Bagger, with dark humor. "If it had been gek, I could have understood it, although it were incorrectly written. Geb, Gebrer, Algebra, Gebruderbuh,--I am a big fool."

"But it is no matter, she shall have an answer," he shouted after a while, and seated himself to write a long, glowing love-letter. When it was finished and read, he tore it in pieces.

"No," said he, "if destiny has intended the least thing by acting to me as mail-carrier through the window, let me act reasonably." He wrote on a little piece of paper:

"As the old Norwegians, when they went to Iceland, threw their high-seat pillars into the sea with the resolution to settle where they should go ashore, so I send this out. My faith follows after; and it is my conviction that where this alights, I shall one day come, and salute you as my chosen, as my--." "Yes, now

what more shall I add?" he asked himself. "Ay, as my--'geb'--!" he added, with an outburst of merry humor, that just completed the whole sentimental outburst. He went to the window and threw the paper out; it alighted with a slow quivering. He was already afraid that it would go directly down into the ditch; but then a breeze came lifting it almost up to himself again, then a new current carried it away, lifting it higher and higher, whirling it, till at last it disappeared from his sight in continual ascension, so he thought.

"After all, I have become engaged to-day," he said to himself, with a certain quiet humor, and yet impressed by a feeling that he had really given himself to the unknown.

II.

Six years had passed, and Fritz Bagger had made his mark, although not as a lover. He had become Counsellor, and was particularly distinguished for the skill and energy with which he brought criminals to confession. It is thus that a man of fine and poetic feelings can satisfy himself in such a business, for a time at least: with the half of his soul he can lead a life which to himself and others seems entire only because it is busy, because it keeps him at work, and fills him with a consciousness of accomplishing something practical and good. There is a youthful working power, which needs not to look sharply out into the future for a particular aim of feeling or desire. This power itself, by the mere effort to keep in a given place, is for such an organization, every day, an aim, a relish; and one can for a number of years drive business so energetically, that he, too, slips over that difficult time which in every twenty-four hours threatens to meet him, the time between work and sleep, twilight, when the other half of the soul strives to awaken.

Be it because his professional duties gave him no time or opportunity for courtship, or for some other reason, Fritz Bagger remained a bachelor; and a bachelor with the income of his profession is looked upon as a rich man. Counsellor Bagger would, when business allowed, enter into social life, treating it in that elegant, independent, almost poetic manner, which in most cases is denied to married men, and which is one reason why they press the hand of a bachelor with a sigh, a mixture of envy, admiration, and compassion. If we add here that a bachelor with such a professional income is the possible stepping-stone to an advantageous marriage, it is easily seen that Fritz Bagger was much sought for in company. He went, too, into it as often as allowed by his legal duties, from which he would hasten in the black "swallow-tail" to a dinner or soiree, and often amused himself where most others were weary; because conversation about anything whatever with the cultivated was to him a refreshment, and because he brought with him a good appetite and good humor, resting upon conscientious work. He could show interest in divers trifles, because in their nothingness (quite contrary to the trifles in which half an hour previous, with painful interest, he had ferreted out crime), they appeared to him as belonging to an innocent, childish world; and if conversation approached more earnest things, he spoke freely, and evidently gave himself quite up to the subject, letting the whole surface of his soul flow out. And this procured him friendship and reputation.

In this way, then, six years had slipped by, when Counsellor Bagger, or rather Fritz Bagger as we will call him, in remembrance of his examination-day, and his notes by the flying mail, was invited to a wedding-party on the shooting-ground. The company was not very large,--only thirty couples,--but very elegant. Bagger was a friend in the families of both bride and bridegroom, and consequently being well known to nearly all present he felt himself as among friends gathered by a mutual joy, and was more than usually animated. A superb wine, which the bride's father had himself brought, crowned their spirits with the last perfect wreath. Although the toast to the bridal pair had been officially proposed, Bagger took occasion to offer his congratulations in a second encomium of love and matrimony; which gave a solid, prosaic man opportunity for the witty remark and hearty wish that so distinguished a practical office-holder as Counsellor Bagger would carry his fine theories upon matrimony into practice. The toast was drunk with enthusiasm, and just at that moment a strong wind shook the windows, and burst open one of the doors, blowing so far into the hall as to cause the lights to flicker much.

Bagger became, through the influence of the wine, the company, and the sight of the happy bridal pair, six

years younger. His soul was carried away from criminal and police courts, and found itself on high, as in the attic chamber, with a vision of the small tinted clouds and the angel-heads. The sudden gust of wind carried him quite back to the moment when he sent out his note as the Norwegian heroes their high-seat pillars: the spirit of his twenty-fourth year came wholly over him, queerly mixed with the half-regretful reflection of the thirtieth year, with fun, inclination to talk and to breathe; and he exclaimed, as he rose to acknowledge the toast:

"I am engaged."

"Ay! ay! Congratulate! congratulate!" sounded from all sides.

"This gust of wind, which nearly extinguished the lights, brought me a message from my betrothed!"

"What?" "What is it?" asked the company, their heads at that moment not in the least condition for guessing charades.

"Counsellor Bagger, have you, like the Doge of Venice, betrothed yourself to the sea or storm?" asked the bridegroom.

"Hear him, the fortunate! sitting upon the golden doorstep to the kingdom of love! Let him surmise and guess all that concerns Cupid, for he has obtained the inspiration, the genial sympathy," exclaimed Bagger. "Yes," he continued, "just like the Doge of Venice, but not as aristocratic! From my attic chamber, where I sat on my examination-day, guided by Cupid, in a manner which it would take too long to narrate, I gave to the whirlwind a love-letter, and at any moment SHE can step forward with my letter, my promise, and demand me soul and body."

"Who is it, then?" asked bridegroom and bride, with the most earnest interest.

"Yes, how can I tell that? Do I know the whirlwind's roads?"

"Was the letter signed with your name?"

"No; but don't you think I will acknowledge my handwriting?" replied Bagger, quite earnestly.

This earnestness with reference to an obligation which no one understood became comical; and Bagger felt at the moment that he was on the brink of the ridiculous. Trying to collect himself, he said:

"Is it not an obligation we all have? Do not both bride and bridegroom acknowledge that long before they knew each other the obligation was present?"

"Yes, yes!" exclaimed the bridegroom.

"And the whirlwind, accident, the unknown power, brought them together so that the obligation was redeemed?"

"Yes, yes!"

"Let us, then," continued Bagger, "drink a toast to the wind, the accident, the moving power, unknown and yet controlling. To those of us who, as yet, are unprovided for and under forty, it will at some time undoubtedly bring a bride; to those who are already provided for will come the expected in another form. So a toast to the wind that came in here and flickered the lights; to the unknown, that brings us the wished for; and to ourselves, that we may be prepared to receive it when announced."

"Bravo!" exclaimed the bridegroom, looking upon his bride.

"Puh-h-h!" thought Bagger, seating himself with intense relief, "I have come out of it somewhat decently after all. The deuce take me before I again express a sentimentality."

How Counsellor Bagger that night could have fallen asleep, between memory, or longing and discontent, is difficult to tell, had he not on his arrival home found a package of papers, an interesting theft case. He sat down instantly to read, and day dawned ere they were finished. His last thought, before his eyelids closed, was,-- Two years in the House of Correction.

III.

A month later, toward the close of September, two ladies, twenty or twenty-two years of age, were walking in a garden about ten miles from Copenhagen. Although the walks were quite wide, impediments in them made it difficult for the ladies to go side by side. The autumn showed itself uneven and jagged. The currant and gooseberry boughs, that earlier hung in soft arches, now projected stiffly forth, catching in the ladies' dresses; branches from plum and apple trees hung bare and broken, and required attention above also. One of the ladies apparently was at home there: this was evident partly from her dress, which, although elegant, was domestic, and partly by her taking the lead and paying honor, by drawing boughs and branches aside, holding them until the other lady, who was more showily dressed, had slipped past. On account of the hindrances of the walk there were none of those easy, subdued, familiar conversations, which otherwise so naturally arise when young ladies, acquaintances, or "friends," visit each other, and from the house slip out alone into garden or wood. An attentive observer meanwhile, by scrutinizing the physiognomy of both, would, perhaps, have come to the conclusion, that even if these two had been together on the most unobstructed road, no confidence would have arisen between them, and would have suspected the hostess of trying to atone for her lack of interest, by being polite and careful. She was not strikingly handsome, but possessed of a fine nature, which manifested itself in the whole figure, and perhaps, especially, in the uncommonly well-formed nose; yet it was by peering into her eyes that one first obtained the idea of a womanhood somewhat superior to the generality of her sex. Their expression was not to be caught at once: they told of both meditation and resolve, and hinted at irony or badinage, which works so queerly when it comes from deep ground. The other lady was "burgherly-genteel," a handsome, cultivated girl, had certainly also some soul, but yet was far less busy with a world in her own heart than with the world of fashion. It was about the world, the world of Copenhagen, that Miss Brandt at this moment was giving Miss Hjelm an account, interrupted by the boughs and branches, and although Miss Hjelm was not, nun-like, indifferent either to fashions or incidents in high life, the manner in which Miss Brandt unmistakably laid her soul therein, caused her to go thus politely before.

"But you have heard about Emmy Ibsen's marriage?" asked Miss Brandt.

"Yes, it was about a month ago, I think."

"Yes, I was bridesmaid."

"Indeed!" said Miss Hjelm, in a voice which atoned for her brevity.

"The party was at the shooting-ground."

"So!" said Miss Hjelm again, with as correct an intonation as if she had learned it for "I don't care." "Take care, Miss Brandt," she added, stooping to avoid an apple-branch.

"Take care?--oh, for that branch!" said Miss Brandt, and avoided it as charmingly and coquettishly as if it had been living.

"It was very gay," she added, "even more so than wedding-parties commonly are; but this was caused a good deal by Counsellor Bagger."

"So!"

"Yes, he was very gay ... I was his companion at table.

"Ah!"

"Oh, only to think! at the table he stands up declaring that he is engaged."

"Was his lady present?"

"No, that she was not, I think. Do you know who it was?"

"No, how should I know that, Miss Brandt?"

"The whirlwind!"

"The whirlwind?"

"Yes. He said that he, as a young man, in a solemn moment had sent his love letter or his promise out with the wind, and he was continually waiting for an answer: he had given his promise, was betrothed!--Ou!"

"What is it?" asked Miss Hjelm, sympathetically. The truth was, the young hostess at this moment had relaxed her polite care, and a limb of a gooseberry-bush had struck against Miss Brandt's ankle.

The pain was soon over; and the two ladies, who now had reached the termination of the walk, turned toward the house side by side, each protecting herself, unconscious that any change had occurred.

"But I hardly believe it," continued Miss Brandt: "he said it perhaps only to make himself conspicuous, for certain gentlemen are just as coquettish as ... as they accuse us of being."

Miss Hjelm uttered a doubting, "Um!"

"Yes, that they really are! Have you ever seen any lady as coquettish as an actor?"

"I don't know any of them, but I should suppose an actress might be."

"No: no actress I have ever met of the better sort was really coquettish. I don't know how it is with them, but I believe they have overcome coquettishness."

"But you think, then, Counsellor Bang is coquettish?"

"Not Bang--Bagger. Yes; for although he said he had this romantic love for a fairy, he often does court to modest earthly ladies. He is properly somewhat of a flirt."

"That is unbecoming an old man."

"Yes; but he is not old."

"Oh!" said Miss Hjelm, laughing: "I have only known one war counsellor, and he was old; so I thought of all

war counsellors as old."

"Yes; but Counsellor Bagger is not war counsellor, but a real Superior Court Counsellor."

"Oh, how earnest that is! And so he is in love with a fairy?"

"Yes: it is ridiculous!" said Miss Brandt, laughing. During this conversation they had reached the house, and Miss Brandt complained that something was yet pricking her ankle. They went into Miss Hjelm's room, and here a thorn was discovered and taken out.

"How pretty and cosy this room really is!" said Miss Brandt, looking around. "In a situation like this one can surely live in the country summer and winter. Out with us at Taarback it blows in through the windows, doors, and very walls."

"That must be bad in a whirlwind."

"Yes--yes: still, it might be quite amusing when the whirlwind carried such billets: not that one would care for them; yet they might be interesting for a while."

"Oh, yes! perhaps."

"Yes: how do you think a young girl would like it, when there came from Heaven a billet, in which one pledged himself to her for time and eternity?"

"That isn't easy to say; but I don't believe the occurrence quite so uncommon. A friend of mine once had such a billet blown to her, and she presented me with it."

"Does one give such things away? Have you the billet?"

"I will look for it," answered Miss Hjelm; and surely enough, after longer search in the sewing-table, in drawers, and small boxes, than was really necessary, she found it. Miss Brandt read it, taking care not to remark that it very much appeared to her as if it resembled the one the counsellor had mentioned.

"And such a billet one gives away!" she said after a pause.

"Yes: will you have it?" asked Miss Hjelm, as though after a sudden resolution.

Miss Brandt's first impulse was an eager acceptance; but she checked herself almost as quickly, and answered:

"Oh, yes, thank you, as a curiosity." Then slowly put it between her glove and hand.

As Miss Brandt and her company rode away, said Miss Hjelm's cousin, a handsome, middle-aged widow, to her:

"How is it, Ingeborg? It appears to me you laugh with one eye and weep with the other."

"Yes: a soap-bubble has burst for me, and glitters, maybe, for another."

"You know I seldom understand the sentimental enigmas: can you not interpret your words?"

"Yes: to-day an illusion has vanished, that had lasted for six years."

"For six years?" said her cousin, with an inquiring or sympathizing look. "So it began when you were hardly sixteen years."

"Now do you believe, that when I was in my sixteenth year I saw an ideal of a man, and was enamoured of him, and to-day I hear that he is married."

"No, I don't know as I believe just that," answered the cousin, dropping her eyes; "but I suppose that then you had a pretty vision, and have carried it along with you in silence--and with faith."

"But it was something more than a vision; it was a letter--a love- letter."

The cousin looked upon Ingeborg so inquiringly, so anxiously, that words were unnecessary. Beside this the cousin knew, that when Ingeborg was inclined to talk, she did so without being asked, and if she wished to be silent, she was silent.

Ingeborg continued: "One time, I drove to town with sainted father. Father was to go no further than to Noerrebro, and I had an errand at Vestervold. So I stepped out and went through the Love-path. As I came to the corner of the path, and the Ladegaardsway, the wind blew so violently against me, that I could hardly breathe; and something blew against my veil, fluttering with wings like a humming-bird. I tried to drive it away, for it blinded one of my eyes; but it blew back again. So I caught it and was going to let it fly away over my head, but that moment I saw it was written upon, and read it. It was a love-letter! A man wrote that he sent this as in old times the Norwegian emigrants let their high-seat pillars be carried by the sea, and where it came he would one time come, and bring his faith to his destined-- Geb."

"Geb'? What is that?" asked the cousin. "That is Ingeborg," answered Miss Hjelm, with a plain simplicity, showing how deeply she had believed in the earnestness of the message.

"It was really remarkable!" said the cousin, and added with a smile which perhaps was somewhat ironical: "And did you then resolve to remain unmarried, until the unknown letter-writer should come and redeem his vow?"

"I will not say that," answered Ingeborg, who quickly became more guarded; "but the letter perhaps contained some stronger requirements than under the circumstances could be fulfilled."

"So! and now?"

"Now I have presented the letter to Miss Brandt."

"You gave it away? Why?"

"Because I learned that the man, who perhaps or probably wrote it in his youth, has spoken about it publicly, and is counsellor in one of the courts."

"Oh, I understand," said the cousin, half audibly: "when the ideal is found out to be a counsellor, then--"

"Then it is not an ideal any longer? No. The whole had been spoiled by being fumbled in public. I would get away from the temptation to think of him. Do court to him, announce myself to him as the happy finder,--I could not."

"That I understand very well," said the cousin, putting her arm affectionately around Ingeborg's waist; "but why did you just give Miss Brandt the letter?"

"Because she is acquainted with the counsellor, and indeed, as far as I could understand, feels somewhat for him. They two can get each other; and what a wonderful consecration it will be when she on the marriage-day gives him the letter!"

The cousin said musingly: "And such secrets can live in one whole year, without another surmising it! Suddenly she added: "But how will Miss Brandt on that occasion interpret the word 'Geb'?"

"Oh! I suppose a single syllable is of no consequence; and, besides, Miss Brandt is a judicious girl," answered Ingeborg, with an inexpressible flash in the dark eyes.

IV.

Good fortune seldom comes singly. One morning Criminal and Court Counsellor Bagger got, at his residence at Noerre Street, official intelligence that from the first of next month he was transferred to the King's Court, and in grace was promoted to be veritable counsellor of justice there; rank, fourth-class, number three. As, gratified by this friendly smile from above, he went out to repair to the court-house, he met in the porch a postman, who delivered him a letter. With thoughts yet busy with new title and court, Counsellor Bagger broke the letter, but remained as if fixed to the ground. In it he read:

"The high-seat pillars have come on shore.

"--'GEB.'--"

One says well, that a man's love or season of courtship lasts till his thirtieth year, and after that time he is ambitious; but it is not always so, and with Counsellor Bagger it was in all respects the contrary. His ambition was already, if not fully reached, yet in some degree satisfied. The faculty of love had not been at all employed, and the letter came like a spark in a powder-cask; it ran glowing through every nerve. The youthful half of his soul, which had slept within him, wakened with such sudden, revolutionary strength, that the other half soul, which until now had borne rule, became completely subject; yes, so wholly, that Counsellor Bagger went past the court-house and came down in Court-house Street without noticing it. Suddenly he missed the big building with the pillars and inscription: "With law shall Lands be built;" looked around confused, and turned back.

So much was he still at this moment Criminal Examiner, that among the first thoughts or feelings which the mysterious letter excited in him was this: It can be a trick, a foolery. But in the next moment it occurred to him, that never to any living soul had he mentioned his bold figure of the high-seat pillars, and still less revealed the mysterious, to him so valued, syllable--geb--. No doubt could exist: the fine, perfumed paper, the delicate lady handwriting, and the few significant words testified, that the billet which once in youthful, sanguine longing he had entrusted to the winds of heaven, had come to a lady, and that in one way or another she had found him out. He remembered very well, that a single time, five or six weeks before, he had in a numerous company mentioned that incident, and he did not doubt that the story had extended itself as ripples do, when one throws a stone into the water; but where in the whole town, or indeed the land, had the ripple hit the exact point? He looked again at the envelope. It bore the stamp of the Copenhagen city mail: that was all. But that showed with some probability that the writer lived in Copenhagen, and maybe at this moment she looked down upon him from one of the many windows; for now he stood by the fountain. There was something in the paper, the handwriting, or more properly perhaps in the secrecy, that made her seem young, spirited, beautiful, piquant. There was something fairy-like, exalted, intoxicating, in the feeling that the object of the longing and hope of his youth had been under the protection of a good spirit, and that the great unknown had taken care of and prepared for him a companion, a wife, just at the moment when he had become Counsellor of Justice of the Superior Court. But who was she? This was the only thing painful in the affair; but this intriguing annoyance was not to be avoided, if the lady was to remain within her sphere, surrounded by respect and esteem.

"What would I have thought of a lady, a woman, who came straight forward and handed out the billet, saying: 'Here I am'?" he asked himself, at the moment when at last he had found the court-house stairs and was ascending.

How it fared that day with the examinations is recorded in criminal and police court documents; but a veil is thrown over it in consideration of the fact, that a man only once in his life is made Counsellor of Justice in the King's Court. The day following it went better; although it is pretty sure that a horse thief went free from further reproof, because the counsellor was busy rolling that stone up the mountain: Where shall I seek her if she does not write again? Will she write again? If she would do that, why did she not write a little more at first?

A couple of weeks after the receipt of the letter, one evening about seven o'clock, the counsellor sat at home, not as before by his writing-table busy with acts, but on a corner of the sofa, with drooping arms, deeply absorbed in a mixture of anxious doubts and dreaming expectations. Hope built air-castles, and doubt then puffed them over like card-houses. One of his fancies was, that she summoned him--he would not even in thought use the expression: gave him an interview--at a masquerade. It was consequently no common masquerade, but a grand, elegant masked ball, to which a true lady could repair. The clock was at eleven, the appointed hour: he waited anxiously the pressing five minutes; then she came and extended him the fine hand in the finest straw-colored glove--

"Letter to the Counsellor of Justice," said Jens, with strong Funen accent, and short, soldierly pronunciation.

It is so uncommon that what one longs for comes just at the moment of most earnest desire; but notwithstanding the letter was from her, the Counsellor of Justice knew the superscription, would have known it among a hundred thousand. The letter read thus:

"I ought to be open towards you; and, as we shall never meet, I can be so."

Here the Counsellor of Justice stopped a moment and caught for breath. A good many of our twenty-year-old beaux, who have never been admitted to the bar, far less have been Court Counsellors, would, under similar circumstances, have said to themselves: "She writes that she will be open; that is to say, now she will fool me: we will never meet; that is to say, now I shall soon see her." But Counsellor Bagger believed every word as gospel, and his knees trembled. He read further:

"I am ashamed of the few words I last wrote you; but my apology is, that it is only two days since I learned that you are married. I have been mistaken, but more in what may be imputed to me than in what I have thought. My only comfort is, that I shall never be known by you or anybody, and that I shall be forgotten, as I shall forget."

"Never! But who can have spread the infamous slander! What dreadful treachery of some wretch or gossiping wench, who knows nothing about me! And how can she believe it! How in such a town as Copenhagen can it be a matter of doubt for five minutes, if a Superior Court Counsellor is married or not! Or maybe there is some other Counsellor Bagger married,--a Chamber Counsellor or the like? Or maybe she lives at a distance, in a quiet world, so that the truth of it does not easily reach her? So there is no sunshine more!

"If she should sometime meet me, and know that I was, am, and have been unmarried, that meanwhile we have both become old and gray,-- can one think of anything more sad? It is enough to make the heart cease beating! But suppose, too, that to-morrow she finds out that she has been deceived: she has once written, 'I was mistaken,' and cannot, as a true woman, write it again, unless she first heard from me, and learned how I longed--and so I am cut off from her, as if I lived in the moon. More, more! for I can meet her upon the street and touch her arm without surmising it. It is insupportable! Our time has mail, steamboats, railroads, telegraphs: to me these do not exist; for of what use are they altogether, when one knows not where to

search."

A thought came suddenly, like a meteor in the dark: advertise. What family in Copenhagen did not the Address Paper reach? He would put in an advertisement,--but how? "Fritz Bagger is not married."--No: that was too plain.--"F. B. is not married."--No: that was not plain enough. As he could find no successful use for his own name, it flashed into his mind to use hers,--geb--; and although it was painful to him to publish this, to him, almost sacred syllable for profane eyes to gaze upon, yet it comforted him, that only one, she herself, would understand it. Yet he hesitated. But one cannot make an omelet without breaking eggs; and although the heart's finest fibres ache at the thought of sending a message to a fairy through the Address Paper, yet one yields to this rather than lose the fairy.

At last, after numerous efforts he stopped at this: "--geb--! It is a mistake: he waits only for--geb--." It appeared to him to contain the approach to a happy result, and tired out by emotion he fell asleep on his sofa.

Some days after came a new letter with the dear handwriting: its contents were:

"Well! appear eight days from to-day at Mrs. Canuteson's, to congratulate her upon her birthday."

This was sunshine after thunder; this was hope's rainbow which arched itself up to heaven from the earth, yet wet with tears.

"And so she belongs to good society," said the Counsellor of Justice, without noticing how by these words he discovered to himself that a doubt or suspicion had lain until now behind his ecstasy. "But," he added, "consequently, it is my own friends who have spread the rumor of my marriage. Friends indeed! A wife is a man's only friend. It is hard, suicidal, to remain a bachelor."

On the appointed day he went too early. Mrs. Canuteson was yet alone. She was surprised at his congratulatory visit; but, however, as it was a courtesy, the surprise was mingled with delight, and Bagger was not the man whose visit a lady would not receive with pleasure. With that ingenuity of wit one can sometimes have, just when the heart is full and taken possession of, he did wonders, and entertained the lady in so lively a manner that she did not perceive how long a time he was passing with her. As the door at length opened, the lady exclaimed:

"Oh, that is charming! Heartily welcome! Thank you for last time, [Footnote: In Sweden and Norway when the guest meets the host or hostess for the first time after an entertainment, the first greeting on the part of the former is always, "Thank you for the last time."] and for all the good in your house! How does your mother do? This amiable young lady's acquaintance I made last summer when we were in the country, and at last she is so good as to keep her promise and visit me. Counsellor Bagger--Miss Hjelm."

The Counsellor wasn't sure that it was She, but he was convinced that it ought to be. Not to speak of Ingeborg Hjelm's being really amiable and distinguee, his heart was now prepared, as a photographer's glass which has received collodium, and took the first girl picture that met it. He was quite afraid that there would come more to choose among. Yet the fairy brightness of the unknown had at this moment lost itself for him; for, however brilliant it may appear to the fancy, it cannot be compared with the warm, beautiful reality, particularly so long as this itself is new and unknown.

He approached and spoke to Miss Hjelm with painful hidden emotion of soul. She was friendly and open, for the name Counsellor Bagger did not occur to her; and the idea she had formed of him did not at all compare with the young, elegant, handsome man she was now speaking with. True enough, his manner was somewhat peculiarly gallant, which a lady cannot easily mistake; but this gallantry was united with such an unmistakable respect, or more properly awe, that he gave her the impression of a poetical, knightly nature.

By and by there came more ladies, both married and unmarried, but Bagger had almost forgotten what errand they could have with him. At last Miss Brandt came also, accompanied by her sister. As she opened the door, and saw Bagger by the side of Miss Hjelm, she gave a little, a very little, cry, or, more properly, gasped aloud for breath, and made a movement, as if something kept her back.

"Oh! my dress caught," she said, arranged it a little, and then approached Mrs. Canuteson, with smiling face, to offer her congratulation.

Bagger looked at the watch: he had been there two hours! After yet lingering to exchange a few polite words with Miss Brandt, he took leave. His visit had in all respects been so unusual, and had given occasion for so much comment, that it required more time than could be given there; and his name was not at all mentioned after he left.

V.

Now it is certainly true, that whenever Counsellor Bagger was seen for quite a time, he was mostly dreaming and suffering; and people who have not themselves experienced something similar, or have not a fancy for putting themselves in his place, will say, perhaps, that they could have managed themselves better. But, at all events, it cannot be said, that from this time forward he was unpractical; for within eight days from Mrs. Canuteson's birthday he had not only learned where Miss Hjelm lived, but had established himself in a tavern close by the farm, and obtained admittance to the house, which last was not so difficult, since Mrs. Hjelm was a friendly, hospitable lady, and since neither her daughter nor niece thought they ought to prejudice her against him.

In this manner four or five days passed away, which, to judge from Bagger's appearance, were to him very pleasant. He wrote to his colleagues in the Superior Court, that one could only value an autumn in Nature's lap after so laborious and health-destroying work as his life for many years had been. Then one day he received a letter from the unknown, reading thus:

"Be more successful than last time, at Mrs. Emmy Lund's on Tuesday, two o'clock. Please notice, two o'clock precisely."

"Does she mean so? Is she really coquettish? Yet I think I have been successful so far," said Bagger to himself, and waited for the Tuesday with comparative ease; in truth he did not at all understand why he should be troubled to go to town.

As early on Tuesday forenoon as proper, he went over to the farm, and was somewhat surprised that there was to be seen no preparation for a town journey. Ingeborg, in her usual morning dress, was seated at the sewing-table. He waited until towards twelve o'clock, calculating that two hours was the least she needed in which to dress and drive to town. The long hand threatened to touch the short hand at the number twelve, without any appearance of Ingeborg's noticing it. She only now and then cast a stealthy look at him, for it had not escaped her, nor the others, that he was in expectancy and excitement. When the clock struck twelve,--he was just alone with her,--he asked suddenly, in a quick, trembling voice:

"Miss Hjelm, you know I am Superior Court Counsellor?"

"No: that I did not know," she said almost with dread, and arose. "No: that I have never known!"

"But allow me, dear lady, so you know it now," he said, surprised that the title or profession produced so strong an effect.

"Yes, now I know it," she said, and held her hand upon her heart. "Why do you tell me that? What does that

signify?"

"Nothing else, Miss Hjelm, than that you may understand that I don't believe in witchcraft."

A speaker's physiognomy is often more intelligible than his words; and as Miss Hjelm saw the both hearty and spirited or jovial expression in the counsellor's face, she had not that inclination, which she under other circumstances would have had, quickly to break off the conversation and go away. It is possible, also, that his situation as Superior Court Counsellor--as that counsellor mentioned by Miss Brandt--did not, after a moment's consideration, appear to her so dreadful as at the first moment of surprise. So she answered:

"But, Mr. Counsellor, is there then anybody who has accused you of believing in witchcraft?"

"No, dear madam; but for all that I can assure you, that at the moment the clock struck twelve I thought that you, by two o'clock, most fly away in the form of a bird."

"As the clock struck twelve now, at noon?--not at midnight?"

"No, just a little since."

"That is remarkable. Can you satisfy my curiosity, and tell me why?"

"Because under ordinary circumstances it appears to me impossible for a lady to make her toilette and drive ten miles in less than two hours."

"That is quite true, Mr. Counsellor; but neither do I intend to drive ten miles to-day."

"It was for that reason that I said, fly."

"Neither fly. And to convince you and quite certainly rid you of the idea of witchcraft, you can stay here, if you please, until-- what time was it?"

"Two o'clock."

"That is two long hours; but the Counsellor can, if he please, lay that offering upon the altar of education."

"Oh! I know another altar, upon which I would rather offer the two only all too short hours"--.

"Let it now be upon that of education. You promised my cousin and me that you would read to us about popular science of nature and interesting facts in the life of animals."

"Yes, dear madam; but *I* cannot fly: my carriage stands waiting at the tavern."

"Oh, I beg pardon! an agreeable journey, Mr. Counsellor."

"Yes; but I don't understand why I shall drive the ten miles."

"Every one knows his own concerns best."

"Oh, yes! that is true. But I at least don't know mine."

Miss Hjelm made no answer to this, and there was a little pause.

"I would," continued the counsellor, somewhat puzzled, "take the great liberty to propose that you should ride with me."

"I have already told the Counsellor that I did not intend to go to town to-day," answered Miss Hjelm, coldly.

"Yes," continued Bagger, following his own ideas, "and so I thought, also, that we could as well stay here."

At this moment Bagger was so earnest and impassioned, that Ingeborg, in hearing words so very wide of what she regarded as reasonable, began to suspect his mind of being a little disordered, and with an inquiring anxiousness looked at him.

Meeting the look from these eyes, Bagger could no longer continue the inquisition which he had carried on for the sake of involving Miss Hjelm in self-contradiction and bringing her to confession. He himself came to confession, and exclaimed:

"Miss Ingeborg, I ask you for Heaven's sake have pity on me, and tell me if you expect me at two o'clock to-day at Mrs. Lund's!"

"I expect you at Mrs. Lund's!" exclaimed Miss Hjelm.

"Is it not you, then, who have written me that--"

"I have never written to you!" cried Ingeborg, and almost tore away the hand which Bagger tried to hold.

"For God's sake, don't go, Miss--! My dear madam, you must forgive me: you shall know all!"

And now he began to tell his tale, not according to rules of rhetoric and logic, but on the contrary in a way which certainly showed how little even our abler lawyers are educated to extemporize.

But, however, there was in his words a certain almost wild eloquence; and, beside, Miss Hjelm had some foreknowledge, that helped her to understand and fill up what was wanting under the counsellor's restless eloquence. At last he came to the point; while his words were of whirlwind and letters, his tone and eye spoke, unconsciously to him, a true, honest, though fanciful language of passion; and however comical a disinterested spectator might have found it, it sounded very earnest to her who was the object and sympathetic listener.

"Yes; but what then?" at last asked Ingeborg, with a soft smile and not withdrawing the hand that Bagger had seized. "The proper meaning of what you have told me is that your troth is plighted to another, unknown lady."

"No: that isn't the proper meaning--"

"But yet it is a fact. At the moment when you stand at the altar with one, another can step forward and claim you."

"Oh, that kind of a claim! A piece of paper without signature, sent away in the air! In law it has no validity at all, and morally it has no power, when I love another as I love you, Ingeborg!"

"That I am not sure of. It appears to me there is something painful in not being faithful to one's youth and its promises, and in the consciousness of having deceived another."

"You say this so earnestly, Ingeborg, that you make me desperate. I confess that there is something ...

something I would wish otherwise ... but for Heaven's sake, make it not so earnest!"

As Ingeborg knew so well about it, she could not regard the matter as earnestly as her words denoted; but for another reason she had suddenly conceived or felt an earnestness. It would not do to have a husband with so much fancy as Bagger, always having something unknown, fairy-like, lying out upon the horizon, holding claim upon him from his youth; and on the other hand it was against her principles, notwithstanding her confidence in his silence, to convey to him the knowledge that it was Miss Brandt who played fairy.

She said to him, "You must have your letter, your obligation, your marriage promise back."

"Yes," he answered with a sigh of discouragement: "it is true enough I ought; but where shall I turn? That is just the immeasurable difficulty."

"Write by the same mail as before."

"Which?"

"Let the whirlwind, that brought the first letter to its destination, also take care of this, in which you demand your word back."

"Oh, that you do not mean! Or, if you mean it, then I may honestly confess that I am not young any more or have not received another youth. I have not courage to write anything, for fear it should come to others than to you."

"So I see that, after all, I may act as witch to-day. Write, and I will take care of the letter: do you hesitate?"

"No: only it took me a moment to comprehend the promise involved in this that you will take care of my letter. I obey you blindly; but what shall I write?"

"Write: 'Dear fairy,--Since I woo Miss Hjelm's hand and heart,--'"

"Oh, you acknowledge it! O Ingeborg, the Lord's blessing upon you!" said Bagger, and would rise.

"I ask you to send me my billet back.'--Have you that?"

"Yes, Ingeborg, my Ingeborg, my unspeakably loved Ingeborg! How poor language is, when the heart is so full!"

"Now, name, date, and address. Have you that? 'Postscriptum. I give you my word of honor, that I neither know who you are, or how this letter shall reach you.'--Have you that?"

"That I can truly give. I am as blind as"...

"Let me add the witch-formulae."

"O Ingeborg, you will write upon the same paper with me, in a letter where I have written your name!"

"Hand me the pen. We must have the letter sent to the mail before two o'clock."

"Two o'clock. How queer! The last letter reads: 'Take notice of the striking two.'"

"That we will," said Ingeborg.

She wrote: "Dear Miss Brandt, I, too, ask you to send the Counsellor his billet, and I pray you to write upon it: 'Given me by Miss Hjelm.' It is best for all parties that the fun does not come out in gossip. You shall, by return of mail, receive back your letters."

VI.

It is allowed to charitable minds to remain in doubt about what had really been Miss Brandt's design. Perhaps she only wished to make roguish psychological experiments, to convince herself to how many forenoon congratulatory visits a Counsellor of Justice of the Superior Court could be brought to appear. The emotion she almost exposed, when at Mrs. Canuteson's she saw Bagger by Miss Hjelm's side, may have been pure surprise at the working of the affair. Every one of the rest of us who have been conversant with the whirlwind, the letter, and Ingeborg's relinquishment of the same, would also have been surprised at seeing her and the letter-writer brought together notwithstanding, and would not, perhaps, have been able with as much ease and success to hide our surprise. The letter to Bagger, in which Miss Brandt, contrary to her better knowledge, spoke of him as married, may have been a sincere attempt to end the whole in a way which repentance and anxiety quickly seized upon to put an insurmountable hindrance before herself; but it may surely enough have had also the aim to see how far Bagger had gone and how much spirit and fancy he had to carry the intrigue out. The more one thinks upon it, the less one feels able to give either of the two interpretations absolute preference. Yet one will have remarked, that Ingeborg herself in her little note mentioned the matter as "fun." On the other side, if it was earnestness, if she had felt "somewhat" for Counsellor Bagger, then let us take comfort in the fact that Miss Brandt was a well-cultivated girl, and that her intellect held dominion over her heart. She could with one eye see that the campaign had ended, and further, that she, by receiving peace pure and simple, had certainly not gained any conquest, but obtained the status quo ante bellum, which often between antagonists has been considered so respectable, that both parties officially have sung *Te Deum*, although surely only one could sing it from the heart. Now it is and may remain undecided what the real state of the case was: from either point of view there was a plain and even line drawn for her, and she followed it. Next day the letter came in an envelope directed to the counsellor.

As Bagger in the presence of Ingeborg opened the letter and again saw the long-lost epistle of his early days, he trembled like a man before whom the spirit-world apparently passes. But as he perceived the added words, he exclaimed in utter perplexity: "Am I awake? Do I dream? How is this possible?"

"Why should it not be possible?" asked Ingeborg. "To whom else should the letter originally have come, than to--geb--?"

"--Geb--?--geb--? Yes, who is--geb--?" asked Bagger with bewildered look.

"Who other than Ingeborg? is it not the third fourth, and fifth letters of my name?"

"Oh!" exclaimed Bagger, pressing his hand upon his forehead, and, as he at the next moment seized Ingeborg's hand, added with an eye which had become dim with joy, "Truly, I have had more fortune than sense."

Ingeborg answered, smiling:

"That ought he to expect who entrusts his fate to the wind's flying mail."

THE RAILROAD AND THE CHURCHYARD

BY

BJORNSTJERNE BJORNSON

From "The Flying Mail" Translated by Carl Larsen.

THE RAILROAD AND THE CHURCH-YARD

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I.

Canute Aakre belonged to an ancient family of the parish, where it had always been distinguished for its intelligence and care for the public good. His father through self-exertion had attained to the ministry, but had died early, and his widow being by birth a peasant, the children were brought up as farmers. Consequently, Canute's education was only of the kind afforded by the public school; but his father's library had early inspired him with a desire for knowledge, which was increased by association with his friend Henrik Wergeland, who often visited him or sent him books, seeds for his farm, and much good counsel. Agreeably to his advice, Canute early got up a club for practice in debating and study of the constitution, but which finally became a practical agricultural society, for this and the surrounding parishes. He also established a parish library, giving his father's books as its first endowment, and organized in his own house a Sunday-school for persons wishing to learn penmanship, arithmetic, and history. In this way the attention of the public was fixed upon him, and he was chosen a member of the board of parish-commissioners, of which he soon became chairman. Here he continued his endeavors to advance the school interests, which he succeeded in placing in an admirable condition.

Canute Aakre was a short-built, active man, with small sharp eyes and disorderly hair. He had large lips which seemed constantly working, and a row of excellent teeth which had the same appearance, for they shone when he spoke his clear sharp words, which came out with a snap, as when the sparks are emitted from a great fire.

Among the many he had helped to an education, his neighbor Lars Hogstad stood foremost. Lars was not much younger than Canute, but had developed more slowly. Being in the habit of talking much of what he read and thought, Canute found in Lars--who bore a quiet, earnest manner--a good listener, and step by step a sensible judge. The result was, that he went reluctantly to the meetings of the board, unless first furnished with Lars Hogstad's advice, concerning whatever matter of importance was before it, which matter was thus most likely to result in practical improvement. Canute's influence, therefore, brought his neighbor in as a member of the board, and finally into everything with which he himself was connected. They always rode together to the meetings, where Lars never spoke, and only on the road to and from, could Canute learn his opinion. They were looked upon as inseparable.

One fine autumn day, the parish-commissioners were convened, for the purpose of considering, among other matters, a proposal made by the Foged, to sell the public grain-magazine, and with the proceeds establish a savings-bank. Canute Aakre, the chairman, would certainly have approved this, had he been guided by his better judgment; but, in the first place, the motion was made by the Foged, whom Wergeland did not like, consequently, neither did Canute; secondly, the grain-magazine had been erected by his powerful paternal grandfather, by whom it was presented to the parish. To him the proposal was not free from an appearance of personal offence; therefore, he had not spoken of it to any one, not even to Lars, who never himself introduced a subject.

As chairman, Canute read the proposal without comment, but, according to his habit, looked over to Lars, who sat as usual a little to one side, holding a straw between his teeth; this he always did when entering upon a subject, using it as he would a toothpick, letting it hang loosely in one corner of his mouth, or turning it more quickly or slowly, according to the humor he was in. Canute now saw with surprise, that the straw moved very fast. He asked quickly, "Do you think we ought to agree to this?"

Lars answered dryly, "Yes, I do."

The whole assembly, feeling that Canute was of quite a different opinion, seemed struck, and looked at Lars, who said nothing further, nor was further questioned. Canute turned to another subject, as if nothing had happened, and did not again resume the question till toward the close of the meeting, when he asked with an air of indifference if they should send it back to the Foged for closer consideration, as it certainly was contrary to the mind of the people of the parish, by whom the grain-magazine was highly valued; also, if he should put upon the record, "Proposal deemed inexpedient."

"Against one vote," said Lars.

"Against two," said another instantly.

"Against three," said a third, and before the chairman had recovered from his surprise, a majority had declared in favor of the proposal.

He wrote; then read in a low tone, "Referred for acceptance, and the meeting adjourned." Canute, rising and closing the "Records," blushed deeply, but resolved to have this vote defeated in the parish meeting. In the yard he hitched his horse to the wagon, and Lars came and seated himself by his side. On the way home they spoke upon various subjects, but not upon this.

On the following day Canute's wife started for Lars' house, to inquire of his wife if anything had happened between their husbands; Canute had appeared so queerly when he returned home the evening previous. A little beyond the house she met Lars' wife, who came to make the same inquiry on account of a similar peculiar behavior in her husband. Lars' wife was a quiet, timid thing, easily frightened, not by hard words, but by silence; for Lars never spoke to her unless she had done wrong, or he feared she would do so. On the contrary, Canute Aakre's wife spoke much with her husband, and particularly about the commissioners' meetings, for lately they had taken his thoughts, work, and love from her and the children. She was jealous of it as of a woman, she wept at night about it, and quarrelled with her husband concerning it in the day. But now she could say nothing; for once he had returned home unhappy; she immediately became much more so than he, and for the life of her she must know what was the matter. So as Lars' wife could tell her nothing, she had to go for information out in the parish, where she obtained it, and of course was instantly of her husband's opinion, thinking Lars incomprehensible, not to say bad. But when she let her husband perceive this, she felt that, notwithstanding what had occurred, no friendship was broken between them; on the contrary, that he liked Lars very much.

The day for the parish meeting came. In the morning, Lars Hogstad drove over for Canute Aakre, who came out and took a seat beside him. They saluted each other as usual, spoke a little less than they were wont on the way, but not at all of the proposal. The meeting was full; some, too, had come in as spectators, which Canute did not like, for he perceived by this a little excitement in the parish. Lars had his straw, and stood by the stove, warming himself, for the autumn had begun to be cold. The chairman read the proposal in a subdued and careful manner, adding, that it came from the Foged, who was not habitually fortunate. The building was a gift, and such things it was not customary to part with, least of all when there was no necessity for it.

Lars, who never before had spoken in the meetings, to the surprise of all, took the floor. His voice trembled; whether this was caused by regard for Canute, or anxiety for the success of the bill, we cannot say; but his arguments were clear, good, and of such a comprehensive and compact character as had hardly before been heard in these meetings. In concluding, he said:

"Of what importance is it that the proposal is from the Foged?-- none,--or who it was that erected the house, or in what way it became the public property?"

Canute, who blushed easily, turned very red, and moved nervously as usual when he was impatient; but notwithstanding, he answered in a low, careful tone, that there were savings banks enough in the country, he thought, quite near, and almost too near. But if one was to be instituted, there were other ways of attaining this end, than by trampling upon the gifts of the dead, and the love of the living. His voice was a little unsteady when he said this, but recovered its composure, when he began to speak of the grain magazine as such, and reason concerning its utility.

Lars answered him ably on this last, adding: "Besides, for many reasons I would be led to doubt whether the affairs of this parish are to be conducted for the best interests of the living, or for the memory of the dead; or further, whether it is the love and hate of a single family which rules, rather than the welfare of the whole."

Canute answered quickly: "I don't know whether the last speaker has been the one least benefited not only by the dead of this family, but also by its still living representative."

In this remark he aimed first at the fact that his powerful grandfather had, in his day, managed the farm for Lars' grandfather, when the latter, on his own account, was on a little visit to the penitentiary.

The straw, which had been moving quickly for a long time, was now still:

"I am not in the habit of speaking everywhere of myself and family," said he, treating the matter with calm superiority; then he reviewed the whole matter in question, aiming throughout at a particular point. Canute was forced to acknowledge to himself, that he had never looked upon it from that standpoint, or heard such reasoning; involuntarily he had to turn his eye upon Lars. There he stood tall and portly, with clearness marked upon the strongly-built forehead and in the deep eyes. His mouth was compressed, the straw still hung playing in its corner, but great strength lay around. He kept his hands behind him, standing erect, while his low deep intonations seemed as if from the ground in which he was rooted. Canute saw him for the first time in his life, and from his inmost soul felt a dread of him; for unmistakably this man had always been his superior! He had taken all Canute himself knew or could impart, but retained only what had nourished this strong hidden growth.

He had loved and cherished Lars, but now that he had become a giant, he hated him deeply, fearfully; he could not explain to himself why he thought so, but he felt it instinctively, while gazing upon him; and in this forgetting all else, he exclaimed:

"But Lars! Lars! what in the Lord's name ails you?"

He lost all self-control,--"you, whom I have"--"you, who have"--he couldn't get out another word, and seated himself, only to struggle against the excitement which he was unwilling to have Lars see; he drew himself up, struck the table with his fist, and his eyes snapped from below the stiff disorderly hair which always shaded them. Lars appeared as if he had not been interrupted, only turning his head to the assembly, asking if this should be considered the decisive blow in the matter, for in such a case nothing more need be said.

Canute could not endure this calmness.

"What is it that has come among us?" he cried. "Us, who to this day have never debated but in love and upright zeal? We are infuriated at each other as if incited by an evil spirit;" and he looked with fiery eyes upon Lars, who answered:

"You yourself surely bring in this spirit, Canute, for I have spoken only of the case. But you will look upon it only through your own self-will; now we shall see if your love and upright zeal will endure, when once it is decided agreeably to our wish."

"Have I not, then, taken good care of the interests of the parish?"

No reply. This grieved Canute, and he continued:

"Really, I did not think otherwise than that I had accomplished something;--something for the good of the parish;--but may be I have deceived myself."

He became excited again, for it was a fiery spirit within him, which was broken in many ways, and the parting with Lars grieved him, so he could hardly control himself. Lars answered:

"Yes, I know you give yourself the credit for all that is done here, and should one judge by much speaking in the meetings, then surely you have accomplished the most."

"Oh, is it this!" shouted Canute, looking sharply upon Lars: "it is you who have the honor of it!"

"Since we necessarily talk of ourselves," replied Lars, "I will say that all matters have been carefully considered by us before they were introduced here."

Here little Canute Aakre resumed his quick way of speaking:

"In God's name take the honor, I am content to live without it; there are other things harder to lose!"

Involuntarily Lars turned his eye from Canute, but said, the straw moving very quickly: "If I were to speak my mind, I should say there is not much to take honor for;--of course ministers and teachers may be satisfied with what has been done; but, certainly, the common men say only that up to this time the taxes have become heavier and heavier."

A murmur arose in the assembly, which now became restless. Lars continued:

"Finally, to-day, a proposition is made which, if carried, would recompense the parish for all it has laid out; perhaps, for this reason, it meets such opposition. It is the affair of the parish, for the benefit of all its inhabitants, and ought to be rescued from being a family matter." The audience exchanged glances, and spoke half audibly, when one threw out a remark as he rose to go to his dinner-pail, that these were "the truest words he had heard in the meetings for many years." Now all arose, and the conversation became general. Canute Aakre felt as he sat there that the case was lost, fearfully lost; and tried no more to save it. He had somewhat of the character attributed to Frenchmen, in that he was good for first, second, and third attacks, but poor for self-defence--his sensibilities overpowering his thoughts.

He could not comprehend it, nor could he sit quietly any longer; so, yielding his place to the vice-chairman, he left,--and the audience smiled.

He had come to the meeting accompanied by Lars, but returned home alone, though the road was long. It was a cold autumn day; the way looked jagged and bare, the meadow gray and yellow; while frost had begun to appear here and there on the roadside. Disappointment is a dreadful companion. He felt himself so small and desolate, walking there; but Lars was everywhere before him, like a giant, his head towering, in the dusk of evening, to the sky. It was his own fault that this had been the decisive battle, and the thought grieved him sorely: he had staked too much upon a single little affair. But surprise, pain, anger, had mastered him; his heart still burned, shrieked, and moaned within him. He heard the rattling of a wagon behind; it was Lars, who came driving his superb horse past him at a brisk trot, so that the hard road gave a sound of thunder. Canute gazed after him, as he sat there so broad-shouldered in the wagon, while the horse, impatient for home, hurried on unurged by Lars, who only gave loose rein. It was a picture of his power; this man drove toward the mark! He, Canute, felt as if thrown out of his wagon to stagger along there in the autumn cold.

Canute's wife was waiting for him at home. She knew there would be a battle; she had never in her life believed in Lars, and lately had felt a dread of him. It had been no comfort to her that they had ridden away together, nor would it have comforted her if they had returned in the same way. But darkness had fallen, and they had not yet come. She stood in the doorway, went down the road and home again; but no wagon appeared. At last she hears a rattling on the road, her heart beats as violently as the wheels revolve; she clings to the doorpost, looking out; the wagon is coming; only one sits there; she recognizes Lars, who sees and recognizes her, but is driving past without stopping. Now she is thoroughly alarmed! Her limbs fail her; she staggers in, sinking on the bench by the window. The children, alarmed, gather around, the youngest asking for papa, for the mother never spoke with them but of him. She loved him because he had such a good heart, and now this good heart was not with them; but, on the contrary, away on all kinds of business, which brought him only unhappiness; consequently, they were unhappy too.

"Oh, that no harm had come to him to-day! Canute was so excitable! Why did Lars come home alone? why didn't he stop?"

Should she run after him, or, in the opposite direction, toward her husband? She felt faint, and the children pressed around her, asking what was the matter; but this could not be told to them, so she said they must take supper alone, and, rising, arranged it and helped them. She was constantly glancing out upon the road. He did not come. She undressed and put them to bed, and the youngest repeated the evening prayer, while she bowed over him, praying so fervently in the words which the tiny mouth first uttered, that she did not perceive the steps outside.

Canute stood in the doorway, gazing upon his little congregation at prayer. She rose; all the children shouted "Papa!" but he seated himself, and said gently:

"Oh! let him repeat it."

The mother turned again to the bedside, that meantime he might not see her face; otherwise, it would have been like intermeddling with his grief before he felt a necessity of revealing it. The child folded its hands,--the rest followed the example,--and it said:

"I am now a little lad, But soon shall grow up tall, And make papa and mamma glad, I'll be so good to all! When in Thy true and holy ways, Thou dear, dear God wilt help me keep;--Remember now Thy name to praise And so we'll try to go to sleep!"

What a peace now fell! Not a minute more had passed ere the children all slept in it as in the lap of God; but the mother went quietly to work arranging supper for the father, who as yet could not eat. But after he had gone to bed, he said:

"Now, after this, I shall be at home."

The mother lay there, trembling with joy, not daring to speak, lest she should reveal it; and she thanked God for all that had happened, for, whatever it was, it had resulted in good.

II.

In the course of a year, Lars was chosen head Justice of the Peace, chairman of the board of commissioners, president of the savings-bank, and, in short, was placed in every office of parish trust to which his election was possible. In the county legislature, during the first year, he remained silent, but afterward made himself as conspicuous as in the parish council; for here, too, stepping up to the contest with him who had always borne sway, he was victorious over the whole line, and afterward himself manager. From this he was elected to the Congress, where his fame had preceded him, and he found no lack of challenge. But here, although steady and

independent, he was always retiring, never venturing beyond his depth, lest his post as leader at home should be endangered by a possible defeat abroad.

It was pleasant to him now in his own town. When he stood by the church-wall on Sundays, and the community glided past, saluting and glancing sideways at him,--now and then one stepping up for the honor of exchanging a couple of words with him,--it could almost be said that, standing there, he controlled the whole parish with a straw, which, of course, hung in the corner of his mouth.

He deserved his popularity; for he had opened a new road which led to the church; all this and much more resulted from the savings- bank, which he had instituted and now managed; and the parish, in its self-management and good order, was held up as an example to all others.

Canute, of his own accord, quite withdrew,--not entirely at first, for he had promised himself not thus to yield to pride. In the first proposal he made before the parish board, he became entangled by Lars, who would have it represented in all its details; and, somewhat hurt, he replied: "When Columbus discovered America he did not have it divided into counties and towns,--this came by degrees afterward;" upon which, Lars compared Canute's proposition (relating to stable improvements) to the discovery of America, and afterward by the commissioners he was called by no other name than "Discovery of America." Canute thought since his influence had ceased there, so, also, had his duty to work; and afterwards declined re-election.

But he was industrious, and, in order still to do something for the public good, he enlarged his Sunday-school, and put it, by means of small contributions from the pupils, in connection with the mission cause, of which he soon became the centre and leader in his own and surrounding counties. At this, Lars remarked that, if Canute ever wished to collect money for any purpose, he must first know that its benefit was only to be realized some thousands of miles away.

There was no strife between them now. True, they associated with each other no longer, but saluted and exchanged a few words whenever they met. Canute always felt a little pain in remembering Lars, but struggled to overcome it, by saying to himself that it must have been so. Many years afterward at a large wedding-party, where both were present and a little gay, Canute stepped upon a chair and proposed a toast to the chairman of the parish council, and the county's first congressman. He spoke until he manifested emotion, and, as usual, in an exceedingly handsome way. It was honorably done, and Lars came to him, saying, with an unsteady eye, that for much of what he knew and was, he had to thank him.

At the next election, Canute was again elected chairman.

But if Lars Hogstad had foreseen what was to follow, he would not have influenced this. It is a saying that "all events happen in their time," and just as Canute appeared again in the council, the ablest men in the parish were threatened with bankruptcy, the result of a speculative fever which had been raging long, but now first began to react. They said that Lars Hogstad had caused this great epidemic, for it was he who had brought the spirit of speculation into the parish. This penny malady had originated in the parish board; for this body itself had acted as leading speculator. Down to the youth of twenty years, all were endeavoring by sharp bargains to make the one dollar, ten; extreme parsimony, in order to lay up in the beginning, was followed by an exceeding lavishness in the end: and as the thoughts of all were directed to money only, a disposition to selfishness, suspicion, and disunion had developed itself, which at last turned to prosecutions and hatred. It was said that the parish board had set the example in this also; for one of the first acts, performed by Lars as chairman, was a prosecution against the minister, concerning doubtful prerogatives. The venerable pastor had lost, but had also immediately resigned. At the time some had praised, others denounced, this act of Lars; but it had proved a bad example. Now came the effects of his management in the form of loss to all the leading men of the parish; and consequently, the public opinion quickly changed. The opposite party immediately found a champion; for Canute Aakre had come into the parish board,--introduced there by Lars himself.

The struggle at once began. All those youths, who, in their time, had been under Canute Aakre's instruction, were now grown-up men, the best educated, conversant with all the business and public transactions in the parish; Lars had now to contend against these and others like them, who had disliked him from their childhood. One evening after a stormy debate, as he stood on the platform outside his door, looking over the parish, a sound of distant threatening thunder came toward him from the large farms, lying in the storm. He knew that that day their owners had become insolvent, that he himself and the savings-bank were going the same way: and his whole long work would culminate in condemnation against him.

In these days of struggle and despair, a company of surveyors came one evening to Hogstad, which was the first farm at the entrance of the parish to mark out the line of a new railroad. In the course of conversation, Lars perceived it was still a question with them whether the road should run through this valley, or another parallel one.

Like a flash of lightning it darted through his mind, that, if he could manage to get it through here, all real estate would rise in value, and not only he himself be saved, but his popularity handed down to future generations. He could not sleep that night, for his eyes were dazzled with visions; sometimes he seemed to hear the noise of an engine. The next day he accompanied the surveyors in their examination of the locality; his horses carried them, and to his farm they returned. The following day they drove through the other valley, he still with them, and again carrying them back home. The whole house was illuminated, the first men of the parish having been invited to a party made for the surveyors, which terminated in a carouse that lasted until morning. But to no avail; for the nearer they came to the decision, the clearer it was to be seen that the road could not be built through here without great extra expense. The entrance to the valley was narrow, through a rocky chasm, and the moment it swung into the parish the river made a curve in its way, so that the road would either have to make the same--crossing the river twice--or go straight forward through the old, now unused, churchyard. But it was not long since the last burials there, for the church had been but recently moved.

Did it only depend upon a strip of an old churchyard, thought Lars, whether the parish should have this great blessing or not?-- then he would use his name and energy for the removal of the obstacle. So immediately he made a visit to minister and bishop, from them to county legislature and Department of the Interior; he reasoned and negotiated; for he had possessed himself of all possible information concerning the vast profits that would accrue on the one side, and the feelings of the parish on the other, and had really succeeded in gaining over all parties. It was promised him that by the reinterment of some bodies in the new churchyard, the only objection to this line might be considered as removed, and the king's approbation guaranteed. It was told him that he need only make the motion in the county meeting.

The parish had become as excited on the question as himself. The spirit of speculation, which had been prevalent so many years, now became jubilant. No one spoke or thought of anything but Lars' journey and its probable result. Consequently, when he returned with the most splendid promises, they made much ado about him; songs were sung to his praise,--yes, if at that time one after another of the largest farms had toppled over, not a soul would have given it any attention; the former speculation fever had been succeeded by the new one of the railroad.

The county board met; an humble petition that the old churchyard might be used for the railroad was drawn up to be presented to the king. This was unanimously voted; yes, there was even talk of voting thanks to Lars, and a gift of a coffee-pot, in the model of a locomotive. But finally, it was thought best to wait until everything was accomplished. The petition from the parish to the county board was sent back, with a requirement of a list of the names of all bodies which must necessarily be removed. The minister made out this, but instead of sending it directly to the county board, had his reasons for communicating it first to the parish. One of the members brought it to the next meeting. Here, Lars opened the envelope, and as chairman read the names.

Now it happened that the first body to be removed was that of Lars' own grandfather. A Hide shudder passed through the assembly; Lars himself was taken by surprise; but continued. Secondly, came the name of Canute Aakre's grandfather; for the two had died at nearly the same time. Canute Aakre sprang from his seat; Lars stopped; all looked up with dread; for the name of the elder Canute Aakre had been the one most beloved in the parish for generations. There was a pause of some minutes. At last Lars hemmed, and continued. But the matter became worse, for the further he proceeded, the nearer it approached their own day, and the dearer the dead became. When he ceased, Canute Aakre asked quietly if others did not think as he, that spirits were around them. It had begun to grow dusk in the room, and although they were mature men sitting in company, they almost felt themselves frightened. Lars took a bundle of matches from his pocket and lit a candle, somewhat dryly remarking that this was no more than they had known beforehand.

"No," replied Canute, pacing the floor, "this is more than I knew beforehand. Now I begin to think that even railroads can be bought too dearly."

This electrified the audience, and Canute continued that the whole affair must be reconsidered, and made a motion to that effect. In the excitement which had prevailed, he said it was also true that the benefit to be derived from the road had been considerably overrated; for if it did not pass through the parish, there would have to be a depot at each extremity; true, it would be a little more trouble to drive there, than to a station within; yet not so great as that for this reason they should dishonor the rest of the dead. Canute was one of those who, when his thoughts were excited, could extemporize and present most sound reasons; he had not a moment previously thought of what he now said; but the truth of it struck all. Lars, seeing the danger of his position, thought best to be careful, and so apparently acquiesced in Canute's proposition to reconsider; for such emotions, thought he, are always strongest in the beginning; one must temporize with them.

But here he had miscalculated. In constantly increasing the dread of touching their dead overswept the parish; what no one had thought of as long as the matter existed only in talk became a serious question when it came to touch themselves. The women particularly were excited, and at the parish house, on the day of the next meeting, the road was black with the gathered multitude. It was a warm summer day, the windows were taken out, and as many stood without as within. All felt that that day would witness a great battle.

Lars came, driving his handsome horse, saluted by all; he looked quietly and confidently around, not seeming surprised at the throng. He seated himself, straw in mouth, near the window, and not without a smile saw Canute rise to speak, as he thought, for all the dead lying over there in the old churchyard.

But Canute Aakre did not begin with the churchyard. He made a stricter investigation into the profits likely to accrue from carrying the road through the parish, showing that in all this excitement they had been over-estimated. He had calculated the distance of each farm from the nearest station, should the road be taken through the neighboring valley, and finally asked:

"Why has such a hurrah been made about this railroad, when it would not be for the good of the parish after all?"

This he could explain; there were those who had brought about such a previous disturbance, that a greater was necessary in order that the first might be forgotten. Then, too, there were those who, while the thing was new, could sell their farms and lands to strangers, foolish enough to buy; it was a shameful speculation, which not the living only but the dead also must be made to promote!

The effect produced by his address was very considerable. But Lars had firmly resolved, come what would, to keep cool, and smilingly replied that he supposed Canute Aakre himself had been anxious for the railroad, and surely no one would accuse him of understanding speculation. (A little laugh ensued.) Canute had had no objection to the removal of bodies of common people for the sake of the railroad, but when it came to that of his own grandfather, the question became suddenly of vital importance to the whole parish. He said no more,

but looked smilingly at Canute, as did also several others. Meanwhile, Canute Aakre surprised both him and them by replying:

"I confess it; I did not realize what was at stake until it touched my own dead; possibly this is a shame, but really it would have been a greater one not even then to have realized it, as is the case with Lars! Never, I think, could Lars' raillery have been more out of place; for folks with common feelings the thing is really revolting."

"This feeling has come up quite recently," answered Lars, "and so we will hope for its speedy disappearance also. It may be well to think upon what minister, bishop, county officers, engineers, and Department will say, if we first unanimously set the ball in motion and then come asking to have it stopped; if we first are jubilant and sing songs, then weep and chant requiems. If they do not say that we have run mad here in the parish, at least they may say that we have grown a little queer lately."

"Yes, God knows, they can say so," answered Canute; "we have been acting strangely enough during the last few days,--it is time for us to retract. It has really gone far when we can dig up, each his own grandfather, to make way for a railroad; when in order that our loads may be carried more easily forward, we can violate the resting-place of the dead. For is not overhauling our churchyard the same as making it yield us food? What has been buried there in Jesus' name, shall we take up in the name of Mammon? It is but little better than eating our progenitors' bones."

"That is according to the order of nature," said Lars dryly.

"Yes, the nature of plants and animals," replied Canute.

"Are we not then animals?" asked Lars.

"Yes, but also the children of the living God, who have buried our dead in faith upon Him; it is He who shall raise them, and not we."

"Oh, you prate! Are not the graves dug over at certain fixed periods anyway? What evil is there in that it happens some years earlier?" asked Lars.

"I will tell you! What was born of them yet lives; what they built yet remains; what they loved, taught, and suffered for is all around us and within us; and shall we not, then, let their bodies rest in peace?"

"I see by your warmth that you are thinking of your grandfather again," replied Lars; "and will say it is high time you ceased to bother the parish about him, for he monopolized space enough in his lifetime; it isn't worth while to have him lie in the way now he is dead. Should his corpse prevent a blessing to the parish that would reach to a hundred generations, we surely would have reason to say, that of all born here he has done us most harm."

Canute Aakre tossed back his disorderly hair, his eyes darted fire, his whole frame appeared like a drawn bow.

"What sort of a blessing this is that you speak of, I have already proved. It is of the same character as all the others which you have brought to the parish, namely, a doubtful one. True enough you have provided us with a new church; but, too, you have filled it with a new spirit,--and not that of love. True, you have made us new roads,--but also new roads to destruction, as is now plainly evident in the misfortunes of many. True, you have lessened our taxes to the public; but, too, you have increased those to ourselves;--prosecutions, protests, and failures are no blessing to a community. And you dare scoff at the man in his grave whom the whole parish blesses! You dare say he lies in our way,--yes, very likely he lies in your way. This is plainly to be seen; but over this grave you shall fall! The spirit which has reigned over you, and at the same time until now over us,

was not born to rule, only to serve. The churchyard shall surely remain undisturbed; but to-day it numbers one more grave, namely, that of your popularity, which shall now be interred in it."

Lars Hogstad rose, white as a sheet; he opened his mouth, but was unable to speak a word, and the straw fell. After three or four vain attempts to recover it and to find utterance, he belched forth like a volcano:

"Are these the thanks I get for all my toils and struggles? Shall such a woman-preacher be able to direct? Ah, then, the devil be your chairman if ever more I set my foot here! I have kept your petty business in order until to-day; and after me it will fall into a thousand pieces; but let it go now. Here are the 'Records!' (and he flung them across the table). Out on such a company of wenches and brats! (striking the table with his fist). Out on the whole parish, that it can see a man recompensed as I now am!"

He brought down his fist once more with such force, that the leaf of the great table sprang upward, and the inkstand with all its contents downward upon the floor, marking for coming generations the spot where Lars Hogstad, in spite of all his prudence, lost his patience and his rule.

He sprang for the door, and soon after was away from the house. The whole audience stood fixed,--for the power of his voice and his wrath had frightened them,--until Canute Aakre, remembering the taunt he had received at the time of his fall, with beaming countenance, and assuming Lars' voice, exclaimed:

"Is this the decisive blow in the matter?"

The assembly burst into uproarious merriment. The grave meeting closed amid laughter, talk, and high glee; only few left the place, those remaining called for drink, and made a night of thunder succeed a day of lightning. They felt happy and independent as in old days, before the time in which the commanding spirit of Lars had cowed their souls into silent obedience. They drank toasts to their liberty, they sang, yes, finally they danced, Canute Aakre with the vice-chairman taking lead, and all the members of the council following, and boys and girls too, while the young ones outside shouted, "hurrah!" for such a spectacle they had never before witnessed.

III.

Lars moved around in the large rooms at Hogstad without uttering a word. His wife who loved him, but always with fear and trembling, dared not so much as show herself in his presence. The management of the farm and house had to go on as it would, while a multitude of letters were passing to and fro between Hogstad and the parish, Hogstad and the capital; for he had charges against the county board which were not acknowledged, and a prosecution ensued; against the savings-bank, which were also unacknowledged, and so came another prosecution. He took offence at articles in the Christiania Correspondence, and prosecuted again, first the chairman of the county board, and then the directors of the savings-bank. At the same time there were bitter articles in the papers, which according to report were by him, and were the cause of great strife in the parish, setting neighbor against neighbor. Sometimes he was absent whole weeks at once, nobody knowing where, and after returning lived secluded as before. At church he was not seen after the grand scene in the representatives' meeting.

Then, one Saturday night, the mail brought news that the railroad was to go through the parish after all, and through the old churchyard. It struck like lightning into every home. The unanimous veto of the county board had been in vain; Lars Hogstad's influence had proved stronger. This was what his absence meant, this was his work! It was involuntary on the part of the people that admiration of the man and his dogged persistency should lessen dissatisfaction at their own defeat; and the more they talked of the matter the more reconciled they seemed to become: for whatever has once been settled beyond all change develops in itself, little by little, reasons why it is so, which we are accordingly brought to acknowledge.

In going to church next day, as they encountered each other they could not help laughing; and before the service, just as nearly all were convened outside,—young and old, men and women, yes, even children,—talking about Lars Hogstad, his talents, his strong will, and his great influence, he himself with his household came driving up in four carriages. Two years had passed since he was last there. He alighted and walked through the crowd, when involuntarily all lifted their hats to him like one man; but he looked neither to the right nor the left, nor returned a single salutation. His little wife, pale as death, walked behind him. In the house, the surprise became so great that, one after another, noticing him, stopped singing and stared. Canute Aakre, who sat in his pew in front of Lars', perceiving the unusual appearance and no cause for it in front, turned around and saw Lars sitting bowed over his hymn-book, looking for the place.

He had not seen him until now since the day of the representatives' meeting, and such a change in a man he never could have imagined. This was no victor. His head was becoming bald, his face was lean and contracted, his eyes hollow and bloodshot, and the giant neck presented wrinkles and cords. At a glance he perceived what this man had endured, and was as suddenly seized with a feeling of strong pity, yes, even with a touch of the old love. In his heart he prayed for him, and promised himself surely to seek him after service; but, ere he had opportunity, Lars had gone. Canute resolved he would call upon him at his home that night, but his wife kept him back.

"Lars is one of the kind," said she, "who cannot endure a debt of gratitude: keep away from him until possibly he can in some way do you a favor, and then perhaps he will come to you."

However, he did not come. He appeared now and then at church, but nowhere else, and associated with no one. On the contrary, he devoted himself to his farm and other business with an earnestness which showed a determination to make up in one year for the neglect of many; and, too, there were those who said it was necessary.

Railroad operations in the valley began very soon. As the line was to go directly past his house, Lars remodelled the side facing the road, connecting with it an elegant verandah, for of course his residence must attract attention. They were just engaged in this work when the rails were laid for the conveyance of gravel and timber, and a small locomotive was brought up. It was a fine autumn evening when the first gravel train was to come down. Lars stood on the platform of his house to hear the first signal, and see the first column of smoke; all the hands on the farm were gathered around him. He looked out over the parish, lying in the setting sun, and felt that he was to be remembered so long as a train should roar through the fruitful valley. A feeling of forgiveness crept into his soul. He looked toward the churchyard, of which a part remained, with crosses bowing toward the earth, but a part had become railroad. He was just trying to define his feelings, when, whistle went the first signal, and a while after the train came slowly along, puffing out smoke mingled with sparks, for wood was used instead of coal; the wind blew toward the house, and standing there they soon found themselves enveloped in a dense smoke; but by and by, as it cleared away, Lars saw the train working through the valley like a strong will.

He was satisfied, and entered the house as after a long day's work. The image of his grandfather stood before him at this moment. This grandfather had raised the family from poverty to forehanded circumstances; true, a part of his citizen-honor had been lost, but forward he had pushed, nevertheless. His faults were those of his time; they were to be found on the uncertain borders of the moral conceptions of that period, and are of no consideration now. Honor to him in his grave, for he suffered and worked; peace to his ashes. It is good to rest at last. But he could get no rest because of his grandson's great ambition. He was thrown up with stone and gravel. Pshaw! very likely he would only smile that his grandson's work passed above his head.

With such thoughts he had undressed and gone to bed. Again his grandfather's image glided forth. What did he wish. Surely he ought to be satisfied now, with the family's honor sounding forth above his grave; who else had such a monument? But yet, what mean these two great eyes of fire? This hissing, roaring, is no longer the locomotive, for see! it comes from the churchyard directly toward the house: an immense procession! The

eyes of fire are his grandfather's, and the train behind are all the dead. It advances continually toward the house, roaring, crackling, flashing. The windows burn in the reflection of dead men's eyes ... he made a mighty effort to collect himself, "For it was a dream, of course, only a dream; but let me waken! ... See: now I am awake; come, ghosts!"

And behold: they really come from the churchyard, overthrowing road, rails, locomotive and train with such violence that they sink in the ground; and then all is still there, covered with sod and crosses as before. But like giants the spirits advanced, and the hymn, "Let the dead have rest!" goes before them. He knows it: for daily in all these years it has sounded through his soul, and now it becomes his own requiem; for this was death and its visions. The perspiration started out over his whole body, for nearer and nearer,--and see there, on the window-pane there, there they are now; and he heard his name. Overpowered with dread he struggled to shout, for he was strangling; a dead, cold hand already clenched his throat, when he regained his voice in a shrieking "Help me!" and awoke. At that moment the window was burst in with such force that the pieces flew on to his bed. He sprang up; a man stood in the opening, around him smoke and tongues of fire.

"The house is burning, Lars, we'll help you out!"

It was Canute Aakre.

When again he recovered consciousness, he was lying out in a piercing wind that chilled his limbs. No one was by him; on the left he saw his burning house; around him grazed, bellowed, bleated, and neighed his stock; the sheep huddled together in a terrified flock; the furniture recklessly scattered: but, on looking around more carefully, he discovered somebody sitting on a knoll near him, weeping. It was his wife. He called her name. She started.

"The Lord Jesus be thanked that you live," she exclaimed, coming forward and seating herself, or rather falling down before him: "O God! O God! now we have enough of that railroad!"

"The railroad?" he asked: but ere he spoke, it had flashed through his mind how it was; for, of course, the cause of the fire was the falling of sparks from the locomotive among the shavings by the new side-wall. He remained sitting, silent and thoughtful; his wife dared say no more, but was trying to find clothes for him: the things with which she had covered him, as he lay unconscious, having fallen off. He received her attentions in silence, but as she crouched down to cover his feet, he laid a hand upon her head. She hid her face in his lap, and wept aloud. At last he had noticed her. Lars understood, and said:

"You are the only friend I have."

Although to hear these words had cost the house, no matter, they made her happy; she gathered courage and said, rising and looking submissively at him:

"That is because no one else understands you."

Now again they talked of all that had transpired, or rather he remained silent, while she told about it. Canute Aakre had been first to perceive the fire, had awakened his people, sent the girls out through the parish, while he himself hastened with men and horses to the spot where all were sleeping. He had taken charge of extinguishing the fire and saving the property; Lars himself he had dragged from the burning room and brought him here on the left, to the windward,--here, out on the churchyard.

While they were talking of all this, some one came driving rapidly up the road and turned off toward them; soon he alighted. It was Canute, who had been home after his church-wagon; the one in which so many times they had ridden together to and from the parish meetings. Now Lars must get in and ride home with him. They took each other by the hand, one sitting, the other standing.

"You must come with me now," said Canute, Without reply Lars rose: they walked side by side to the wagon. Lars was helped in: Canute seated himself by his side. What they talked about as they rode, or afterward in the little chamber at Aakre, in which they remained until morning, has never been known; but from that day they were again inseparable.

As soon as disaster befalls a man, all seem to understand his worth. So the parish took upon themselves to rebuild Lars Hogstad's houses, larger and handsomer than any others in the valley. Again he became chairman, but with Canute Aakre at his side, and from that day all went well.

TWO FRIENDS

BY

ALEXANDER KIELLAND

From "Tales of Two Countries." Translated by H. H. Boyesen.

TWO FRIENDS

BY

ALEXANDER KIELLAND

No one could understand where he got his money from. But the person who marvelled most at the dashing and luxurious life led by Alphonse was his quondam friend and partner.

After they dissolved partnership, most of the custom and the best connection passed by degrees into Charles's hands. This was not because he in any way sought to run counter to his former partner; on the contrary, it arose simply from the fact that Charles was the more capable man of the two. And as Alphonse had now to work on his own account, it was soon clear to any one who observed him closely, that in spite of his promptitude, his amiability, and his prepossessing appearance, he was not fitted to be at the head of an independent business.

And there was one person who DID observe him closely. Charles followed him step by step with his sharp eyes; every blunder, every extravagance, every loss--he knew all to a nicety, and he wondered that Alphonse could keep going so long.

They had as good as grown up together. Their mothers were cousins; the families had lived near each other in the same street; and in a city like Paris proximity is as important as relationship in promoting close intercourse. Moreover, the boys went to the same school.

Thenceforth, as they grew up to manhood, they were inseparable. Mutual adaptation overcame the great differences which originally marked their characters, until at last their idiosyncrasies fitted into each other like the artfully-carved pieces of wood which compose the picture-puzzles of our childhood.

The relation between them was really a beautiful one, such as does not often arise between two young men; for they did not understand friendship as binding the one to bear everything at the hands of the other, but seemed rather to vie with each other in mutual considerateness.

If, however, Alphonse in his relation to Charles showed any high degree of considerateness, he himself was ignorant of it; and if any one had told him of it he would doubtless have laughed loudly at such a mistaken compliment.

For as life on the whole appeared to him very simple and straightforward, the idea that his friendship should in any way fetter him was the last thing that could enter his head. That Charles was his best friend seemed to him as entirely natural as that he himself danced best, rode best, was the best shot, and that the whole world was ordered entirely to his mind.

Alphonse was in the highest degree a spoiled child of fortune; he acquired everything without effort; existence fitted him like an elegant dress, and he wore it with such unconstrained amiability that people forgot to envy him.

And then he was so handsome. He was tall and slim, with brown hair and big open eyes; his complexion was clear and smooth, and his teeth shone when he laughed. He was quite conscious of his beauty, but, as everybody had petted him from his earliest days, his vanity was of a cheerful, good-natured sort, which, after all, was not so offensive. He was exceedingly fond of his friend. He amused himself and sometimes others by teasing him and making fun of him; but he knew Charles's face so thoroughly that he saw at once when the jest was going too far. Then he would resume his natural, kindly tone, until he made the serious and somewhat melancholy Charles laugh till he was ill.

From his boyhood Charles had admired Alphonse beyond measure. He himself was small and insignificant, quiet and shy. His friend's brilliant qualities cast a lustre over him as well, and gave a certain impetus to his life.

His mother often said: "This friendship between the boys is a real blessing for my poor Charles, for without it he would certainly have been a melancholy creature."

When Alphonse was on all occasions preferred to him, Charles rejoiced; he was proud of his friend. He wrote his exercises, prompted him at examination, pleaded his cause with the masters, and fought for him with the boys.

At the commercial academy it was the same story. Charles worked for Alphonse, and Alphonse rewarded him with his inexhaustible amiability and unfailing good-humor.

When subsequently, as quite young men, they were placed in the same banker's office, it happened one day that the principal said to Charles: "From the first of May I will raise your salary."

"I thank you," answered Charles, "both on my own and on my friend's behalf."

"Monsieur Alphonse's salary remains unaltered," replied the chief, and went on writing.

Charles never forgot that morning. It was the first time he had been preferred or distinguished before his friend. And it was his commercial capacity, the quality which, as a young man of business, he valued most, that had procured him this preference; and it was the head of the firm, the great financier, who had himself accorded him such recognition.

The experience was so strange to him that it seemed like an injustice to his friend. He told Alphonse nothing of the occurrence; on the contrary, he proposed that they should apply for two vacant places in the Credit Lyonnais.

Alphonse was quite willing, for he loved change, and the splendid new banking establishment on the Boulevard seemed to him far more attractive than the dark offices in the Rue Bergere. So they removed to the Credit Lyonnais on the first of May. But as they were in the chief's office taking their leave, the old banker said to Charles, when Alphonse had gone out (Alphonse always took precedence of Charles), "Sentiment won't do for a business man."

From that day forward a change went on in Charles. He not only worked as industriously and conscientiously as before, but developed such energy and such an amazing faculty for labor as soon attracted to him the attention of his superiors. That he was far ahead of his friend in business capacity was soon manifest; but every time he received a new mark of recognition he had a struggle with himself. For a long time, every advancement brought with it a certain qualm of conscience; and yet he worked on with restless ardor.

One day Alphonse said, in his light, frank way: "You are really a smart fellow, Charlie! You're getting ahead of everybody, young and old--not to mention me. I'm quite proud of you."

Charles felt ashamed. He had been thinking that Alphonse must feel wounded at being left on one side, and now he learned that his friend not only did not grudge him his advancement, but was even proud of him. By degrees his conscience was lulled to rest, and his solid worth was more and more appreciated.

But if he was in reality the more capable, how came it that he was so entirely ignored in society, while Alphonse remained everybody's darling? The very promotions and marks of appreciation which he had won for himself by hard work were accorded him in a dry, business manner; while every one, from the directors to the messengers, had a friendly word or a merry greeting for Alphonse.

In the different offices and departments of the bank they intrigued to obtain possession of Monsieur Alphonse; for a breath of life and freshness followed ever in the wake of his handsome person and joyous nature. Charles, on the other hand, had often remarked that his colleagues regarded him as a dry person, who thought only of business and of himself.

The truth was that he had a heart of rare sensitiveness, with no faculty for giving it expression.

Charles was one of those small, black Frenchmen whose beard begins right under the eyes; his complexion was yellowish and his hair stiff and splintery. His eyes did not dilate when he was pleased and animated, but they flashed around and glittered. When he laughed the corners of his mouth turned upward, and many a time, when his heart was full of joy and good-will, he had seen people draw back, half-frightened by his forbidding exterior. Alphonse alone knew him so well that he never seemed to see his ugliness; every one else misunderstood him. He became suspicious, and retired more and more within himself.

In an insensible crescendo the thought grew in him: Why should he never attain anything of that which he most longed for--intimate and cordial intercourse and friendliness which should answer to the warmth pent up within him? Why should every one smile to Alphonse with out-stretched hands, while he must content himself with stiff bows and cold glances?

Alphonse knew nothing of all this. He was joyous and healthy, charmed with life and content with his daily work. He had been placed in the easiest and most interesting branch of the business, and, with his quick brain and his knack of making himself agreeable, he filled his place satisfactorily.

His social circle was very large--every one set store by his acquaintance, and he was at least as popular among women as among men.

For a time Charles accompanied Alphonse into society, until he was seized by a misgiving that he was invited for his friend's sake alone, when he at once drew back.

When Charles proposed that they should set up in business together, Alphonse had answered: "It is too good of you to choose me. You could easily find a much better partner."

Charles had imagined that their altered relations and closer association in work would draw Alphonse out of the circles which Charles could not now endure, and unite them more closely. For he had conceived a vague

dread of losing his friend.

He did not himself know, nor would it have been easy to decide, whether he was jealous of all the people who flocked around Alphonse and drew him to them, or whether he envied his friend's popularity.

They began their business prudently and energetically, and got on well.

It was generally held that each formed an admirable complement to the other. Charles represented the solid, confidence-inspiring element, while the handsome and elegant Alphonse imparted to the firm a certain lustre which was far from being without value.

Every one who came into the counting-house at once remarked his handsome figure, and thus it seemed quite natural that all should address themselves to him.

Charles meanwhile bent over his work and let Alphonse be spokesman. When Alphonse asked him about anything, he answered shortly and quietly without looking up.

Thus most people thought that Charles was a confidential clerk, while Alphonse was the real head of the house.

As Frenchmen, they thought little about marrying, but as young Parisians they led a life into which erotics entered largely.

Alphonse was never really in his element except when in female society. Then all his exhilarating amiability came into play, and when he leaned back at supper and held out his shallow champagne-glass to be refilled, he was as beautiful as a happy god.

He had a neck of the kind which women long to caress, and his soft, half-curling hair looked as if it were negligently arranged, or carefully disarranged, by a woman's coquettish hand.

Indeed, many slim white fingers had passed through those locks; for Alphonse had not only the gift of being loved by women, but also the yet rarer gift of being forgiven by them.

When the friends were together at gay supper-parties, Alphonse paid no particular heed to Charles. He kept no account of his own love-affairs, far less of those of his friend. So it might easily happen that a beauty on whom Charles had cast a longing eye fell into the hands of Alphonse.

Charles was used to seeing his friend preferred in life; but there are certain things to which men can scarcely accustom themselves. He seldom went with Alphonse to his suppers, and it was always long before the wine and the general exhilaration could bring him into a convivial humor.

But then, when the champagne and the bright eyes had gone to his head, he would often be the wildest of all; he would sing loudly with his harsh voice, laugh and gesticulate so that his stiff black hair fell over his forehead; and then the merry ladies shrank from him, and called him the "chimney-sweep."

--As the sentry paces up and down in the beleaguered fortress, he sometimes hears a strange sound in the silent night, as if something were rustling under his feet. It is the enemy, who has undermined the outworks, and to-night or to-morrow night there will be a hollow explosion, and armed men will storm in through the breach.

If Charles had kept close watch over himself he would have heard strange thoughts rustling within him. But he would not hear--he had only a dim foreboding that sometime there must come an explosion.

--And one day it came.

It was already after business hours; the clerks had all left the outer office, and only the principals remained behind.

Charles was busily writing a letter which he wished to finish before he left.

Alphonse had drawn on both his gloves and buttoned them. Then he had brushed his hat until it shone, and now he was walking up and down and peeping into Charles's letter every time he passed the desk.

They used to spend an hour every day before dinner in a cafe on the great Boulevard, and Alphonse was getting impatient for his newspapers.

"Will you never have finished that letter?" he said, rather irritably.

Charles was silent a second or two, then he sprang up so that his chair fell over: "Perhaps Alphonse imagined that he could do it better? Did he not know which of them was really the man of business?" And now the words streamed out with that incredible rapidity of which the French language is capable when it is used in fiery passion.

But it was a turbid stream, carrying with it many ugly expressions, upbraidings, and recriminations; and through the whole there sounded something like a suppressed sob.

As he strode up and down the room, with clenched hands and dishevelled hair, Charles looked like a little wiry-haired terrier barking at an elegant Italian grayhound. At last he seized his hat and rushed out.

Alphonse had stood looking at him with great wondering eyes. When he was gone, and there was once more silence in the room, it seemed as though the air was still quivering with the hot words. Alphonse recalled them one by one, as he stood motionless beside the desk.

"Did he not know which was the abler of the two?" Yes, assuredly! he had never denied that Charles was by far his superior.

"He must not think that he would succeed in winning everything to himself with his smooth face." Alphonse was not conscious of ever having deprived his friend of anything.

"I don't care for your cocottes" Charles had said.

Could he really have been interested in the little Spanish dancer? If Alphonse had only had the faintest suspicion of such a thing he would never have looked at her. But that was nothing to get so wild about; there were plenty of women in Paris.

And at last: "As sure as to-morrow comes, I will dissolve partnership!"

Alphonse did not understand it at all. He left the counting-house and walked moodily through the streets until he met an acquaintance. That put other thoughts into his head; but all day he had a feeling as if something gloomy and uncomfortable lay in wait, ready to seize him so soon as he was alone.

When he reached home, late at night, he found a letter from Charles. He opened it hastily; but it contained, instead of the apology he had expected, only a coldly-worded request to M. Alphonse to attend at the counting-house early the next morning "in order that the contemplated dissolution of partnership might be effected as quickly as possible."

Now, for the first time, did Alphonse begin to understand that the scene in the counting-house had been more than a passing outburst of passion; but this only made the affair more inexplicable.

And the longer he thought it over, the more clearly did he feel that Charles had been unjust to him. He had never been angry with his friend, nor was he precisely angry even now. But as he repeated to himself all the insults Charles had heaped upon him, his good-natured heart hardened; and the next morning he took his place in silence, after a cold "Good morning."

Although he arrived a whole hour earlier than usual, he could see that Charles had been working long and industriously. There they sat, each on his side of the desk; they spoke only the most indispensable words; now and then a paper passed from hand to hand, but they never looked each other in the face.

In this way they both worked--each more busily than the other-- until twelve o'clock, their usual luncheon-time.

This hour of dejeuner was the favorite time of both. Their custom was to have it served in their office, and when the old housekeeper announced that lunch was ready, they would both rise at once, even if they were in the midst of a sentence or of an account.

They used to eat standing by the fireplace, or walking up and down in the warm, comfortable office. Alphonse had always some piquant stories to tell, and Charles laughed at them. These were his pleasantest hours.

But that day, when madame said her friendly "Messieurs, on a servi" they both remained sitting. She opened her eyes wide, and repeated the words as she went out, but neither moved.

At last Alphonse felt hungry, went to the table, poured out a glass of wine and began to eat his cutlet. But as he stood there eating, with his glass in his hand, and looked round the dear old office where they had spent so many pleasant hours, and then thought that they were to lose all this and imbitter their lives for a whim, a sudden burst of passion, the whole situation appeared to him so preposterous that he almost burst out laughing.

"Look here, Charles," he said, in the half-earnest, half-joking tone which always used to make Charles laugh, "it will really be too absurd to advertise: 'According to an amicable agreement, from such and such a date the firm of--'"

"I have been thinking," interrupted Charles, quietly, "that we will put: 'According to MUTUAL agreement.'"

Alphonse laughed no more; he put down his glass, and the cutlet tasted bitter in his mouth.

He understood that friendship was dead between them, why or wherefore he could not tell; but he thought that Charles was hard and unjust to him. He was now stiffer and colder than the other.

They worked together until the business of dissolution was finished; then they parted.

A considerable time passed, and the two quondam friends worked each in his own quarter in the great Paris. They met at the Bourse, but never did business with each other. Charles never worked against Alphonse; he did not wish to ruin him; he wished Alphonse to ruin himself.

And Alphonse seemed likely enough to meet his friend's wishes in this respect. It is true that now and then he did a good stroke of business, but the steady industry he had learned from Charles he soon forgot. He began to neglect his office, and lost many good connections.

He had always had a taste for dainty and luxurious living, but his association with the frugal Charles had hitherto held his extravagances in check. Now, on the contrary, his life became more and more dissipated. He made fresh acquaintances on every hand, and was more than ever the brilliant and popular Monsieur Alphonse; but Charles kept an eye on his growing debts.

He had Alphonse watched as closely as possible, and, as their business was of the same kind, could form a pretty good estimate of the other's earnings. His expenses were even easier to ascertain, and he soon assured himself of the fact that Alphonse was beginning to run into debt in several quarters.

He cultivated some acquaintances about whom he otherwise cared nothing, merely because through them he got an insight into Alphonse's expensive mode of life and rash prodigality. He sought the same cafes and restaurants as Alphonse, but at different times; he even had his clothes made by the same tailor, because the talkative little man entertained him with complaints that Monsieur Alphonse never paid his bills.

Charles often thought how easy it would be to buy up a part of Alphonse's liabilities and let them fall into the hands of a grasping usurer. But it would be a great injustice to suppose that Charles for a moment contemplated doing such a thing himself. It was only an idea he was fond of dwelling upon; he was, as it were, in love with Alphonse's debts.

But things went slowly, and Charles became pale and sallow while he watched and waited.

He was longing for the time when the people who had always looked down upon him should have their eyes opened, and see how little the brilliant and idolized Alphonse was really fit for. He wanted to see him humbled, abandoned by his friends, lonely and poor; and then--!

Beyond that he really did not like to speculate; for at this point feelings stirred within him which he would not acknowledge.

He **WOULD** hate his former friend; he **WOULD** have revenge for all the coldness and neglect which had been his own lot in life; and every time the least thought in defence of Alphonse arose in his mind he pushed it aside, and said, like the old banker, "Sentiment won't do for a business man."

One day he went to his tailor's; he bought more clothes in these days than he absolutely needed.

The nimble little man at once ran to meet him with a roll of cloth: "See, here is the very stuff for you. Monsieur Alphonse has had a whole suit made of it, and Monsieur Alphonse is a gentleman who knows how to dress."

"I did not think that Monsieur Alphonse was one of your favorite customers," said Charles, rather taken by surprise.

"Oh, mon Dieu!" exclaimed the little tailor, "you mean because I have once or twice mentioned that Monsieur Alphonse owed me a few thousand francs. It was very stupid of me to speak so. Monsieur Alphonse has not only paid me the trifle he was owing, but I know that he has also satisfied a number of other creditors. I have done ce cher beau monsieur great injustice, and I beg you never to give him a hint of my stupidity."

Charles was no longer listening to the chatter of the garrulous tailor. He soon left the shop, and went up the street, quite absorbed in the one thought that Alphonse had paid.

He thought how foolish it really was of him to wait and wait for the other's ruin. How easily might not the adroit and lucky Alphonse come across many a brilliant business opening, and make plenty of money without a word of it reaching Charles's ears. Perhaps, after all, he was getting on well. Perhaps it would end in people

saying, "See, at last Monsieur Alphonse shows what he is fit for, now that he is quit of his dull and crabbed partner!"

Charles went slowly up the street with his head bent. Many people jostled him, but he heeded not. His life seemed to him so meaningless, as if he had lost all that he had ever possessed--or had he himself cast it from him? Just then some one ran against him with more than usual violence. He looked up. It was an acquaintance from the time when he and Alphonse had been in the Credit Lyonnais.

"Ah, good-day, Monsieur Charles!" cried he, "It is long since we met. Odd, too, that I should meet you to-day. I was just thinking of you this morning."

"Why, may I ask?" said Charles, half absently.

"Well, you see, only to-day I saw up at the bank a paper--a bill for thirty or forty thousand francs--bearing both your name and that of Monsieur Alphonse. It astonished me, for I thought that you two--hm!--had done with each other."

"No, we have not quite done with each other yet," said Charles slowly.

He struggled with all his might to keep his face calm, and asked, in as natural a tone as he could command, "When does the bill fall due? I don't quite recollect."

"To-morrow or the day after, I think," answered the other, who was a hard-worked business man, and was already in a hurry to be off. "It was accepted by Monsieur Alphonse,"

"I know that," said Charles; "but could you not manage to let ME redeem the bill to-morrow? It is a courtesy--a favor I am anxious to do."

"With pleasure. Tell your messenger to ask for me personally at the bank to-morrow afternoon. I will arrange it; nothing easier. Excuse me; I'm in a hurry. Good-bye!" and with that he ran on.

Next day Charles sat in his counting-house waiting for the messenger who had gone up to the bank to redeem Alphonse's bill.

At last a clerk entered, laid a folded blue paper by his principal's side, and went out again.

Not until the door was closed did Charles seize the draft, look swiftly round the room, and open it. He stared for a second or two at his name, then lay back in his chair and drew a deep breath. It was as he had expected--the signature was a forgery.

He bent over it again. For long he sat, gazing at his own name, and observing how badly it was counterfeited.

While his sharp eyes followed every line in the letters of his name, he scarcely thought. His mind was so disturbed, and his feelings so strangely conflicting, that it was some time before he became conscious how much they betrayed--these bungling strokes on the blue paper.

He felt a strange lump in his throat, his nose began to tickle a little, and, before he was aware of it, a big tear fell on the paper.

He looked hastily around, took out his pocket-handkerchief, and carefully wiped the wet place on the bill. He thought again of the old banker in the Rue Bergere.

What did it matter to him that Alphonse's weak character had at last led him to crime, and what had he lost? Nothing, for did he not hate his former friend? No one could say it was his fault that Alphonse was ruined--he had shared with him honestly, and never harmed him.

Then his thoughts tamed to Alphonse. He knew him well enough to be sure that when the refined, delicate Alphonse had sunk so low, he must have come to a jutting headland in life, and he prepared to leap out of it rather than let disgrace reach him.

At this thought Charles sprang up. That must not be. Alphonse should not have time to send a bullet through his head and hide his shame in the mixture of compassion and mysterious horror which follows the suicide. Thus Charles would lose his revenge, and it would be all to no purpose that he had gone and nursed his hatred until he himself had become evil through it. Since he had forever lost his friend, he would at least expose his enemy, so that all should see what a miserable, despicable being was this charming Alphonse.

He looked at his watch; it was half-past four. Charles knew the cafe in which he would find Alphonse at this hour; he pocketed the bill and buttoned his coat.

But on the way he would call at a police-station, and hand over the bill to a detective, who at a sign from Charles should suddenly advance into the middle of the cafe where Alphonse was always surrounded by his friends and admirers, and say loudly and distinctly so that all should hear it:

"Monsieur Alphonse, you are charged with forgery."

It was raining in Paris. The day had been foggy, raw, and cold; and well on in the afternoon it had begun to rain. It was not a downpour--the water did not fall from the clouds in regular drops--but the clouds themselves had, as it were, laid themselves down in the streets of Paris and there slowly condensed into water.

No matter how people might seek to shelter themselves, they got wet on all sides. The moisture slid down the back of your neck, laid itself like a wet towel about your knees, penetrated into your boots and far up your trousers.

A few sanguine ladies were standing in the portes cocheres, with their skirts tucked up, expecting it to clear; others waited by the hour in the omnibus stations. But most of the stronger sex hurried along under their umbrellas; only a few had been sensible enough to give up the battle, and had turned up their collars, stuck their umbrellas under their arms, and their hands in their pockets.

Although it was early in the autumn it was already dusk at five o'clock. A few gas-jets lighted in the narrowest streets, and in a shop here and there strove to shine out in the thick wet air.

People swarmed as usual in the streets, jostled one another off the pavement, and ruined one another's umbrellas. All the cabs were taken up; they splashed along and bespattered the foot passengers to the best of their ability, while the asphalt glistened in the dim light with a dense coating of mud.

The cafes were crowded to excess; regular customers went round and scolded, and the waiters ran against each other in their hurry. Ever and anon, amid the confusion, could be heard the sharp little ting of the bell on the buffet; it was la dame du comptoir summoning a waiter, while her calm eyes kept a watch upon the whole cafe.

A lady sat at the buffet of a large restaurant on the Boulevard Sebastopol. She was widely known for her cleverness and her amiable manners.

She had glossy black hair, which, in spite of the fashion, she wore parted in the middle of her forehead in

natural curls. Her eyes were almost black and her mouth full, with a little shadow of a moustache.

Her figure was still very pretty, although, if the truth were known, she had probably passed her thirtieth year; and she had a soft little hand, with which she wrote elegant figures in her cashbook, and now and then a little note. Madame Virginie could converse with the young dandies who were always hanging about the buffet, and parry their witticisms, while she kept account with the waiters and had her eye upon every corner of the great room.

She was really pretty only from five till seven in the afternoon-- that being the time at which Alphonse invariably visited the cafe. Then her eyes never left him; she got a fresher color, her mouth was always trembling into a smile, and her movements became somewhat nervous. That was the only time of the day when she was ever known to give a random answer or to make a mistake in the accounts; and the waiters tittered and nudged each other.

For it was generally thought that she had formerly had relations with Alphonse, and some would even have it that she was still his mistress.

She herself best knew how matters stood; but it was impossible to be angry with Monsieur Alphonse. She was well aware that he cared no more for her than for twenty others; that she had lost him-- nay, that he had never really been hers. And yet her eyes besought a friendly look, and when he left the cafe without sending her a confidential greeting, it seemed as though she suddenly faded, and the waiters said to each other: "Look at madame; she is gray tonight."

Over at the windows it was still light enough to read the papers; a couple of young men were amusing themselves with watching the crowds which streamed past. Seen through the great plate-glass windows, the busy forms gliding past one another in the dense, wet, rainy air looked like fish in an aquarium. Further back in the cafe, and over the billiard-tables, the gas was lighted. Alphonse was playing with a couple of friends.

He had been to the buffet and greeted Madame Virginie, and she, who had long noticed how Alphonse was growing paler day by day, had--half in jest, half in anxiety--reproached him with his thoughtless life.

Alphonse answered with a poor joke and asked for absinthe.

How she hated those light ladies of the ballet and the opera who enticed Monsieur Alphonse to revel night after night at the gaming-table, or at interminable suppers! How ill he had been looking these last few weeks! He had grown quite thin, and the great gentle eyes had acquired a piercing, restless look. What would she not give to be able to rescue him out of that life that was dragging him down! She glanced in the opposite mirror and thought she had beauty enough left.

Now and then the door opened and a new guest came in, stamped his feet, and shut his wet umbrella. All bowed to Madame Virginie, and almost all said, "What horrible weather!"

When Charles entered, he saluted shortly and took a seat in the corner beside the fireplace.

Alphonse's eyes had indeed become restless. He looked towards the door every time any one came in; and when Charles appeared, a spasm passed over his face and he missed his stroke.

"Monsieur Alphonse is not in the vein to-day," said an onlooker.

Soon after a strange gentleman came in. Charles looked up from his paper and nodded slightly; the stranger raised his eyebrows a little and looked at Alphonse.

He dropped his cue on the floor.

"Excuse me, gentlemen, I'm not in the mood for billiards to-day," said he, "permit me to leave off. Waiter, bring me a bottle of seltzer-water and a spoon--I must take my dose of Vichy salts."

"You should not take so much Vichy salts, Monsieur Alphonse, but rather keep to a sensible diet," said the doctor, who sat a little way off playing chess.

Alphonse laughed, and seated himself at the newspaper-table. He seized the JOURNAL AMUSANT, and began to make merry remarks upon the illustrations. A little circle quickly gathered round him, and he was inexhaustible in racy stories and whimsicalities.

While he rattled on under cover of the others' laughter, he poured out a glass of seltzer-water and took from his pocket a little box on which was written, in large letters, "Vichy Salts."

He shook the powder out into the glass and stirred it round with a spoon. There was a little cigar-ash on the floor in front of his chair; he whipped it off with his pocket-handkerchief, and then stretched out his hand for the glass.

At that moment he felt a hand on his arm. Charles had risen and hurried across the room he now bent down over Alphonse.

Alphonse turned his head towards him so that none but Charles could see his face. At first he let his eyes travel furtively over his old friend's figure; then he looked up, and, gazing straight at Charles, he said, half aloud, "Charlie!"

It was long since Charles had heard that old pet name. He gazed into the well-known face and now for the first time saw how it had altered of late. It seemed to him as though he were reading a tragic story about himself.

They remained thus far a second or two and there glided over Alphonse's features that expression of imploring helplessness which Charles knew so well from the old school-days, when Alphonse came bounding in at the last moment and wanted his composition written.

"Have you done with the JOURNAL AMUSANT?" asked Charles, with a thick utterance.

"Yes; pray take it," answered Alphonse, hurriedly. He reached him the paper, and at the same time got hold of Charles's thumb. He pressed it and whispered, "Thanks," then--drained the glass.

Charles went over to the stranger who sat by the door: "Give me the bill."

"You don't need our assistance, then?"

"No, thanks."

"So much the better," said the stranger, handing Charles a folded blue paper. Then he paid for his coffee and went.

Madame Virginie rose with a little shriek: "Alphonse! Oh, my God! Monsieur Alphonse is ill."

He slipped off his chair; his shoulders went up and his head fell on one side. He remained sitting on the floor, with his back against the chair.

There was a movement among those nearest; the doctor sprang over and knelt beside him. When he looked in Alphonse's face he started a little. He took his hand as if to feel his pulse, and at the same time bent down over the glass which stood on the edge of the table.

With a movement of the arm he gave it a slight push, so that it fell on the floor and was smashed. Then he laid down the dead man's hand and bound a handkerchief round his chin.

Not till then did the others understand what had happened. "Dead? Is he dead, doctor? Monsieur Alphonse dead?"

"Heart disease," answered the doctor.

One came running with water, another with vinegar. Amid laughter and noise, the balls could be heard cannoning on the inner billiard-table.

"Hush!" some one whispered. "Hush!" was repeated; and the silence spread in wider and wider circles round the corpse, until all was quite still.

"Come and lend a hand," said the doctor.

The dead man was lifted up; they laid him on a sofa in a corner of the room, and the nearest gas-jets were put out.

Madame Virginie was still standing up; her face was chalk-white, and she held her little soft hand pressed against her breast. They carried him right past the buffet. The doctor had seized him under the back, so that his waistcoat slipped up and a piece of his fine white shirt appeared.

She followed with her eyes the slender, supple limbs she knew so well, and continued to stare towards the dark corner.

Most of the guests went away in silence. A couple of young men entered noisily from the street; a waiter ran towards them and said a few words. They glanced towards the corner, buttoned their coats, and plunged out again into the fog.

The half-darkened cafe was soon empty; only some of Alphonse's nearest friends stood in a group and whispered. The doctor was talking with the proprietor, who had now appeared on the scene.

The waiters stole to and fro, making great circuits to avoid the dark corner. One of them knelt and gathered up the fragments of the glass on a tray. He did his work as quietly as he could; but for all that it made too much noise.

"Let that alone until by and by," said the host, softly.

Leaning against the chimney-piece, Charles looked at the dead man. He slowly tore the folded paper to pieces, while he thought of his friend.

HOPES

BY

FREDERIKA BREMER

The Translation by Mary Howitt.

HOPES

BY

FREDERIKA BREMER

I had a peculiar method of wandering without very much pain along the stormy path of life. Although, in a physical as well as in a moral sense, I wandered almost barefoot,-I HOPED, hoped from day to day; in the morning my hopes rested on evening, in the evening on the morning; in the autumn; upon the spring, in spring upon the autumn; from this year to the next, and this amid mere hopes, I had passed through nearly thirty years of my life, without, of all my privations, painfully perceiving the want of anything but whole boots. Nevertheless, I consoled myself easily for this out of doors in the open air but in a drawing-room it always gave me an uneasy manner to have to turn the heels, as being the part least torn, to the front. Much more oppressive was it to me, truly, that I could in the abodes of misery only console with kind words.

I comforted myself, like a thousand others, by a hopeful glance upon the rolling wheel of fortune, and with the philosophical remark, "When the time comes, comes the counsel."

As a poor assistant to a country clergyman with a narrow income and meagre table, morally becoming mouldy in the company of the scolding housekeeper, of the willingly fuddled clergyman, of a foolish young gentleman and the daughters of the house, who, with high shoulders and turned-in toes, went from morning to night paying visits, I felt a peculiarly strange emotion of tenderness and joy as one of my acquaintance informed me by writing, that my uncle, the Merchant P---in Stockholm, to me personally unknown, now lay dying, and in a paroxysm of kindred affection had inquired after his good-for-nothing nephew.

With a flat, meagre little bundle, and a million of rich hopes, the grateful nephew now allowed himself to be shaken up hill and down hill, upon an uncommonly uncomfortable and stiff-necked peasant cart, and arrived, head-over-heels, in the capital.

In the inn where I alighted, I ordered for myself a little--only a very little breakfast,--a trifle--a bit of bread-and-butter--a few eggs.

The landlord and a fat gentleman walked up and down the saloon and chatted. "Nay, that I must say," said the fat gentleman, "this Merchant P--, who died the day before yesterday, he was a fine fellow."

"Yes, yes," thought I; "aha, aha, a fellow, who had heaps of money! Hear you, my friend" (to the waiter), "could not you get me a bit of venison, or some other solid dish? Hear you, a cup of bouillon would not be amiss. Look after it, but quick!"

"Yes," said mine host now, "it is strong! Thirty thousand dollars, and they banko! Nobody in the whole world could have dreamed of it--thirty thousand!"

"Thirty thousand!" repeated I, in my exultant soul, "thirty thousand! Hear you, waiter! Make haste, give me here thirty then--; and give me here banko--no give me here a glass of wine, I mean;" and from head to heart there sang in me, amid the trumpet-beat of every pulse in alternating echoes, "Thirty thousand! Thirty thousand!"

"Yes," continued the fat gentlemen, "and would you believe that in the mass of debts there are nine hundred dollars for credit and five thousand dollars for champagne. And now all his creditors stand there prettily and open their mouths; all the thing in the house are hardly worth two farthings; and out of the house they find, as

the only indemnification--a calash!"

"Aha, that is something quite different! Hear you, youth, waiter! Eh, come you here! take that meat, and the bouillon, and the wine away again; and hear you, observe well, that I have not eaten a morsel of all this. How could I, indeed; I, that ever since I opened my eyes this morning have done nothing else but eat (a horrible untruth!), and it just now occurs to me that it would therefore be unnecessary to pay money for such a superfluous feast."

"But you have actually ordered it," replied the waiter, in a state of excitement.

"My friend," I replied, and seized myself behind the ear, a place whence people, who are in embarrassment, are accustomed in some sort of way to obtain the necessary help--"my friend, it was a mistake for which I must not be punished; for it was not my fault that a rich heir, for whom I ordered the breakfast, is all at once become poor,--yes, poorer than many a poor devil, because he has lost more than the half of his present means upon the future. If he, under these circumstances, as you may well imagine, cannot pay for a dear breakfast, yet it does not prevent my paying for the eggs which I have devoured, and giving you over and above something handsome for your trouble, as business compels me to move off from here immediately."

By my excellent logic, and the "something handsome," I removed from my throat, with a bleeding heart and a watering mouth, that dear breakfast, and wandered forth into the city, with my little bundle under my arm, to seek for a cheap room, while I considered where I was to get the money for it.

In consequence of the violent coming in contact of hope and reality I had a little headache. But when I saw upon my ramble a gentleman, ornamented with ribbons and stars, alight from a magnificent carriage, who had a pale yellow complexion, a deeply-wrinkled brow, and above his eyebrows an intelligible trace of ill-humour; when I saw a young count, with whom I had become acquainted in the University of Upsala, walking along as if he were about to fall on his nose from age and weariness of life, I held up my head, inhaled the air, which accidentally (unfortunately) at this place was filled with the smell of smoked sausage, and extolled poverty, and a pure heart.

I found at length, in a remote street, a little room, which was more suited to my gloomy prospects than to the bright hopes which I cherished two hours before.

I had obtained permission to spend the winter in Stockholm, and had thought of spending it in quite a different way to what now was to be expected. But what was to be done? To let the courage sink was the worst of all; to lay the hands in the lap and look up to heaven, not much better. "The sun breaks forth when one least expects it," thought I, as heavy autumn clouds descended upon the city. I determined to use all the means I could to obtain for myself a decent substance with a somewhat pleasanter prospect for the future, than was opened to me under the miserable protection of Pastor G., and, in the meantime, to earn my daily bread by copying,--a sorrowful expedient in a sorrowful condition.

Thus I passed my days amid fruitless endeavors to find ears which might not be deaf, amid the heart-wearing occupation of writing out fairly the empty productions of empty heads, with my dinners becoming more and more scanty, and with ascending hopes, until that evening against whose date I afterwards made a cross in my calendar.

My host had just left me with the friendly admonition to pay the first quarter's rent on the following day, if I did not prefer (the politeness is French) to march forth again with bag and baggage on a voyage of discovery through the streets of the city.

It was just eight o'clock, on an indescribably cold November evening, when I was revived with this affectionate salutation on my return from a visit to a sick person, for whom I, perhaps-- really somewhat

inconsiderately, had emptied my purse.

I snuffed my sleepy, thin candle with my fingers, and glanced around the little dark chamber, for the further use of which I must soon see myself compelled to gold-making.

"Diogenes dwelt worse," sighed I, with a submissive mind, as I drew a lame table from the window where the wind and rain were not contented to stop outside. At that moment my eye fell upon a brilliantly blazing fire in a kitchen, which lay, Tantalus-like, directly opposite to my modest room, where the fireplace was as dark as possible.

"Cooks, men and women, have the happiest lot of all serving mortals!" thought I, as, with a secret desire to play that fire-tending game, I contemplated the well-fed dame, amid iron pots and stewpans, standing there like an empress in the glory of the firelight, and with the fire-tongs sceptre rummaging about majestically in the glowing realm.

A story higher, I had, through a window, which was concealed by no envious curtain, the view into a brightly lighted room, where a numerous family were assembled round a tea-table covered with cups and bread baskets.

I was stiff in my whole body, from cold and damp. How empty it was in that part which may be called the magazine, I do not say; but, ah, good Heavens! thought I, if, however, that pretty girl, who over there takes a cop of tea-nectar and rich splendid rusks to that fat gentleman who, from satiety, can hardly raise himself from the sofa, would but reach out her lovely hand a little further, and could--she would with a thousand kisses--in vain!-- ah, the satiated gentleman takes his cup; he steeps and steeps his rusk with such eternal slowness--it might be wine. Now the charming girl caresses him. I am curious whether it is the dear papa himself or the uncle, or, perhaps--Ah, the enviable mortal! But no, it is quite impossible; he is at least forty years older than she. See, that indeed must be his wife--an elderly lady, who sits near him on the sofa, and who offers rusks to the young lady. The old lady seems very dignified; but to whom does she go now? I cannot see the person. An ear and a piece of a shoulder are all that peep forth near the window. I cannot exactly take it amiss that the respectable person turns his back to me; but that he keeps the young lady a quarter of an hour standing before him, lets her courtesy and offer her good things, does thoroughly provoke me. It must be a lady--a man could not be so unpolite towards this angelic being. But--or--now she takes the cup; and now, oh, woe! a great man's hand grasps into the rusk-basket--the savage! and how he helps himself--the churl! I should like to know whether it is her brother,--he was perhaps hungry, poor fellow! Now come in, one after the other, two lovely children, who are like the sister. I wonder now, whether the good man with one ear has left anything remaining. That most charming of girls, how she caresses the little ones, and kisses them, and gives to them all the rusks and the cakes that have escaped the fingers of Monsieur Gobble. Now she has had herself, the sweet child! of the whole entertainment, no more than me--the smell.

What a movement suddenly takes place in the room! The old gentleman heaves himself up from the sofa--the person with one ear starts forward, and in so doing, gives the young lady a blow (the dromedary!) which makes her knock against the tea-table, whereby the poor lady, who was just about springing up from the sofa, is pushed down again--the children hop about and clap their hands-- the door flies open--a young officer enters--the young girl throws herself into his arms. So, indeed! Aha, now we have it! I put to my shutters so violently that they cracked, and seated myself on a chair, quite wet through with rain, and with my knees trembling.

What had I to do at the window? That is what one gets when one is inquisitive.

Eight days ago, this family had removed from the country into the handsome house opposite to me; and it had never yet occurred to me to ask who they were, or whence they came. What need was there for me to-night to make myself acquainted with their domestic concerns in an illicit manner? How could it interest me? I was in

an ill-humor; perhaps, too, I felt some little heartache. But for all that, true to my resolution, not to give myself up to anxious thoughts when they could do no good, I seized the pen with stiff fingers, and, in order to dissipate my vexation, wished to attempt a description of domestic happiness, of a happiness which I had never enjoyed. For the rest, I philosophized whilst I blew upon my stiffened hands. "Am I the first who, in the hot hour of fancy, has sought for a warmth which the stern world of reality has denied him? Six dollars for a measure of fir-wood. Yes, prosit, thou art not likely to get it before December! I write!

"Happy, threefold happy, the family, in whose narrow, contracted circle no heart bleeds solitarily, or solitarily rejoices! No look, no smile, remains unanswered; and where the friends say daily, not with words but with deeds, to each other, 'Thy cares, thy joys, thy happiness, are mine also!'"

"Lovely is the peaceful, the quiet home, which closes itself protectingly around the weary pilgrim through life--which, around its friendly blazing hearth, assembles for repose the old man leaning on his staff, the strong man, the affectionate wife, and happy children, who, shouting and exulting, hop about in their earthly heaven, and closing a day spent in the pastimes of innocence, repeat a thanksgiving prayer with smiling lips, and drop asleep on the bosom of their parents, whilst the gentle voice of the mother tells them, in whispered cradle-tones, how around their couch--

"The little angels in a ring, Stand round about to keep A watchful guard upon the bed Where little children sleep."

Here I was obliged to leave off, because I felt something resembling a drop of rain come forth from my eye, and therefore could not any longer see clearly.

"How many," thought I, as my reflections, against my will, took a melancholy turn--"how many are there who must, to their sorrow, do without this highest happiness of earthly life--domestic happiness!"

For one moment I contemplated myself in the only whole glass which I had in my room--that OF TRUTH,--and then wrote again with gloomy feeling:--"Unhappy, indeed, may the forlorn one be called, who, in the anxious and cool moments of life (which, indeed, come so often), is pressed to no faithful heart, whose sigh nobody returns, whose quiet grief nobody alleviates with a 'I understand thee, I suffer with thee!'

"He is cast down, nobody raises him up; he weeps, nobody sees it, nobody will see it; he goes, nobody follows him; he comes, nobody goes to meet him; he rests, nobody watches over him. He is lonely. Oh, how unfortunate he is! Why dies he not? Ah, who would weep for him? How cold is a grave which no warm tears of love moisten!

"He is lonesome in the winter night; for him the earth has no flowers, and dark burn the lights of heaven. Why wanders he, the lonesome one; why waits he; why flies he not, the shadow, to the land of shades? Ah, he still hopes, he is a mendicant who begs for joy, who yet waits in the eleventh hour, that a merciful hand may give him an alms.

"One only little blossom of earth will he gather, bear it upon his heart, in order henceforth not so lonesomely, not so entirely lonesome, to wander down to rest."

It was my own condition which I described. I deplored myself.

Early deprived of my parents, without brothers and sisters, friends, and relations, I stood in the world yet so solitary and forlorn, that but for an inward confidence in heaven, and a naturally happy temper, I should often enough have wished to leave this contemptuous world; till now, however, I had almost constantly hoped from the future, and this more from an instinctive feeling that this might be the best, than to subdue by philosophy every too vivid wish for an agreeable present time, because it was altogether so opposed to possibility. For

some time, however, alas! it had been otherwise with me; I felt, and especially this evening, more than ever an inexpressible desire to have somebody to love,--to have some one about me who would cleave to me--who would be a friend to me;--in short, to have (for me the highest felicity on earth) a wife--a beloved, devoted wife! Oh, she would comfort me, she would cheer me! her affection, even in the poorest hut, would make of me a king. That the love-fire of my heart would not insure the faithful being at my side from being frozen was soon made clearly sensible to me by an involuntary shudder. More dejected than ever, I rose up and walked a few times about my room (that is to say, two steps right forward, and then turn back again). The sense of my condition followed me like the shadow on the wall, and for the first time in my life I felt myself cast down, and threw a gloomy look on my dark future. I had no patron, therefore could not reckon upon promotion for a long time; consequently, also, not upon my own bread--on a friend--a wife, I mean.

"But what in all the world," said I yet once more seriously to myself, "what helps beating one's brains?" Yet once more I tried to get rid of all anxious thoughts. "If, however, a Christian soul could only come to me this evening! Let it be whoever it would-- friend or foe--it would be better than this solitude. Yes, even if an inhabitant of the world of spirits opened the door, he would be welcome to me! What was that? Three blows on the door! I will not, however, believe it--again three!" I went and opened; there was nobody there; only the wind went howling up and down the stairs. I hastily shut the door again, thrust my hands into my pockets, and went up and down for a while, humming aloud. Some moments afterwards I fancied I heard a sigh--I was silent, and listened,-- again there was very evidently a sigh--and yet once again, so deep and so mournful, that I exclaimed with secret terror, "Who is there?" No answer.

For a moment I stood still, and considered what this really could mean, when a horrible noise, as if cats were sent with yells lumbering down the whole flight of stairs, and ended with a mighty blow against my door, put an end to my indecision. I took up the candle, and a stick, and went out. At the moment when I opened the door my light was blown out. A gigantic white figure glimmered opposite to me, and I felt myself suddenly embraced by two strong arms. I cried for help, and struggled so actively to get loose that both myself and my adversary fell to the ground, but so that I lay uppermost. Like an arrow I sprang again upright, and was about to fetch a light, when I stumbled over something--Heaven knows what it was (I firmly believe that somebody held me fast by the feet), by which I fell a second time, struck my head on the corner of the table, and lost my consciousness, whilst a suspicious noise, which had great resemblance to laughter, rang in my ears.

When I again opened my eyes, they met a dazzling blaze of light. I closed them again, and listened to a confused noise around me-- opened them again a very little, and endeavoured to distinguish the objects which surrounded me, which appeared to me so enigmatical and strange that I almost feared my mind had vanished. I lay upon a sofa, and--no, I really did not deceive myself,--that charming girl, who on this evening had so incessantly floated before my thoughts, stood actually beside me, and with a heavenly expression of sympathy bathed my head with vinegar. A young man whose countenance seemed known to me held my hand between his. I perceived also the fat gentleman, another thin one, the lady, the children, and in distant twilight I saw the shimmer of the paradise of the tea-table; in short, I found myself by an incomprehensible whim of fate amidst the family which an hour before I had contemplated with such lively sympathy.

When I again had returned to full consciousness, the young man embraced me several times with military vehemence.

"Do you then no longer know me?" cried he indignantly, as he saw me petrified body and soul. "Have you then forgotten August D--, whose life a short time since you saved at the peril of your own? whom you so handsomely fished up, with danger to yourself, from having for ever to remain in the uninteresting company of fishes? See here, my father, my mother, my sister, Wilhelmina!"

I pressed his hand; and now the parents embraced me. With a stout blow of the fist upon the table, August's father exclaimed, "And because you have saved my son's life, and because you are such a downright honest and good fellow, and have suffered hunger yourself--that you might give others to eat--you shall really have

the parsonage at H--. Yes, you shall become clergyman, I say!--I have jus patronatum, you understand!"

For a good while I was not at all in a condition to comprehend, to think, or to speak; and before all had been cleared up by a thousand explanations, I could understand nothing clearly excepting that Wilhelmina was not--that Wilhelmina was August's sister.

He had returned this evening from a journey of service, during which, in the preceding summer, chance had given to me the good fortune to rescue him from a danger, into which youthful heat and excess of spirit had thrown him. I had not seen him again since this occurrence; earlier, I had made a passing acquaintance with him, had drunk brotherhood with him at the university, and after that had forgotten my dear brother.

He had now related this occurrence to his family, with the easily kindled-up enthusiasm of youth, together with what he knew of me beside, and what he did not know. The father, who had a living in his gift, and who (as I afterwards found) had made from his window some compassionate remarks upon my meagre dinner-table, determined, assailed by the prayers of his son, to raise me from the lap of poverty to the summit of good fortune. August would in his rapture announce to me my good luck instantly, and in order, at the same time, to gratify his passion for merry jokes, made himself known upon my stairs in a way which occasioned me a severe, although not dangerous, contusion on the temples, and the unexpected removal across the street, out of the deepest darkness into the brightest light. The good youth besought a thousand times forgiveness for his thoughtlessness; a thousand times I assured him that it was not worth the trouble to speak of such a trifling blow. And, in fact, the living was a balsam which would have made a greater wound than this imperceptible also.

Astonished, and somewhat embarrassed, I now perceived that the ear and the shoulder, whose possessor had seized so horribly upon the contents of the rusk basket, and over whom I had poured out my gall belonged to nobody else than to August's father, and my patron. The fat gentleman who sat upon the sofa was Wilhelmina's uncle.

The kindness and gayety of my new friends made me soon feel at home and happy. The old people treated me like a child of the house, the young ones as a brother, and the two little ones seemed to anticipate a gingerbread-friend in me.

After I had received two cups of tea from Wilhelmina's pretty hand, to which I almost feared taking, in my abstraction of mind, more rusks than my excellent patron, I rose up to take my leave. They insisted absolutely upon my passing the night there; but I abode by my determination of spending the first happy night in my old habitation, amid thanksgiving to the lofty Ruler of my fate.

They all embraced me afresh; and I now also embraced all rightly, from the bottom of my heart, Wilhelmina also, although not without having gracious permission first. "I might as well have left that alone," thought I afterwards, "if it is to be the first and last time!" August accompanied me back.

My host stood in my room amid the overturned chairs and tables, with a countenance which alternated between rain and sunshine; on one side his mouth drew itself with a reluctant smile up to his ear, on the other it crept for vexation down to his double chin; the eyes followed the same direction, and the whole had a look of a combat, till the tone in which August indicated to him that he should leave us alone, changed all into the most friendly, grinning mien, and the proprietor of the same vanished from the door with the most submissive bows.

August was in despair about my table, my chair, my bed, and so on. It was with difficulty that I withheld him from cudgelling the host who would take money for such a hole. I was obliged to satisfy him with the most holy assurances, that on the following day I would remove without delay. "But tell him," prayed August, "before you pay him, that he is a villain, a usurer, a cheat, a-- or if you like, I will--"

"No, no; heaven defend us!" interrupted I, "be quiet, and let me only manage."

After my young friend had left me, I passed several happy hours in thinking on the change in my fate, and inwardly thanking God for it. My thoughts then rambled to the parsonage; and heaven knows what fat oxen and cows, what pleasure grounds, with flowers, fruits, and vegetables, I saw in spirit surrounding my new paradise, where my Eve walked by my side, and supported on my arm; and especially what an innumerable crowd of happy and edified people I saw streaming from the church when I had preached. I baptized, I confirmed, I comforted my beloved community in the zeal and warmth of my heart--and forgot only the funerals.

Every poor clergyman who has received a living, every mortal, especially to whom unexpectedly a long-cherished wish has been accomplished, will easily picture to himself my state.

Later in the night it sunk at last like a veil before my eyes, and my thoughts fell by degrees into a bewilderment which exhibited on every hand strange images. I preached with a loud voice in my church, and the congregation slept. After the service, the people came out of the church like oxen and cows, and bellowed against me when I would have admonished them. I wished to embrace my wife, but could not separate her from a great turnip, which increased every moment, and at last grew over both our heads. I endeavored to climb up a ladder to heaven, whose stars beckoned kindly and brightly to me; but potatoes, grass, vetches, and peas, entangled my feet unmercifully, and hindered every step. At last I saw myself in the midst of my possessions walking upon my head, and whilst in my sleepy soul I greatly wondered how this was possible, I slept soundly in the remembrance of my dream. Yet then, however, I must unconsciously have continued the chain of my pastoral thoughts, for I woke in the morning with the sound of my own voice loudly exclaiming, "Amen."

That the occurrences of the former evening were actual truth, and no dream, I could only convince myself with difficulty, till August paid me a visit, and invited me to dine with his parents.

The living, Wilhelmina, the dinner, the new chain of hopes for the future which beamed from the bright sun of the present, all surprised me anew with a joy, which one can feel very well, but never can describe.

Out of the depths of a thankful heart, I saluted the new life which opened to me, with the firm determination that, let happen what might, yet always **TO DO THE RIGHT, AND TO HOPE FOR THE BEST.**

Two years after this, I sat on an autumn evening in my beloved parsonage by the fire. Near to me sat my dear little wife, my sweet, Wilhelmina, and spun. I was just about to read to her a sermon which I intended to preach on the next Sunday, and from which I promised myself much edification, as well for her as for the assembled congregation. Whilst I was turning over the leaves, a loose paper fell out. It was the paper upon which, on that evening two years before, in a very different situation, I had written down my cheerful and my sad thoughts. I showed it to my wife. She read, smiled with a tear in her eye, and with a roguish countenance which, as I fancy, is particular to her, took the pen and wrote on the other side of the paper:

"The author can now, thank God, strike out a description which would stand in perfect contrast to that which he once, in a dark hour, sketched of an unfortunate person, as he himself was then.

"Now he is no more lonesome, no more deserted. His quiet sighs are answered, his secret griefs shared, by a wife tenderly devoted to him. He goes, her heart follows him; he comes back, she meets him with smiles; his tears flow not unobserved, they are dried by her hand, and his smiles beam again in hers; for him she gathers flowers, to wreath around his brow, to strew in his path. He has his own fireside, friends devoted to him, and counts as his relations all those who have none of their own. He loves, he is beloved; he can make people feel happy, he is himself happy."

Truly had my Wilhelmina described the present; and, animated by feelings which are gay and delicious as the beams of the spring sun, I will now, as hitherto, let my little troop of light hopes bound out into the future.

I hope, too, that my sermon for the next Sunday may not be without benefit to my hearers; and even if the obdurate should sleep, I hope that neither this nor any other of the greater or the less unpleasantnesses which can happen to me may go to my heart and disturb my rest. I know my Wilhelmina, and believe also that I know myself sufficiently, to hope with certainty that I may always make her happy. The sweet angel has given me hope that we may soon be able to add a little creature to our little happy family, I hope, in the future, to be yet multiplied. For my children I have all kinds of hopes *in petto*. If I have a son, I hope that he will be my successor; if I have a daughter, then--if August would wait-- but I fancy that he is just about to be married.

I hope in time to find a publisher for my sermons. I hope to live yet a hundred years with my wife.

We--that is to say, my Wilhelmina and I--hope, during this time, to be able to dry a great many tears, and to shed as few ourselves as our lot, as children of the earth, may permit.

We hope not to survive each other.

Lastly, we hope always to be able to hope; and when the hour comes that the hopes of the green earth vanish before the clear light of eternal certainty, then we hope that the All-good Father may pass a mild sentence upon His grateful and, in humility, hoping children.

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The Legal Small Print

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(Three Pages)

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